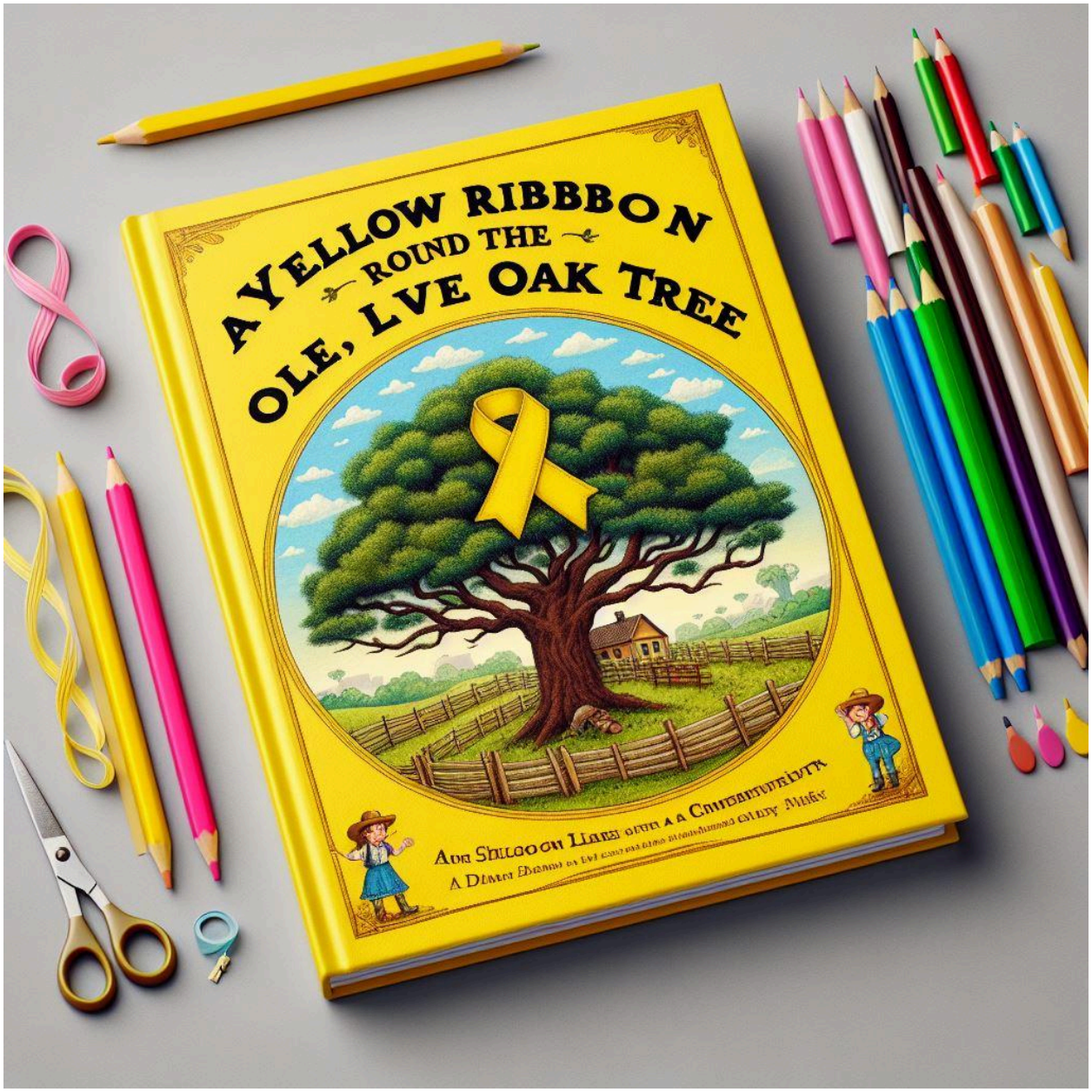

H.L. Dowless

Cast of Characters

Mrs. McNeill: top 2nd grade teacher

Mr. McNeill: headmaster, suit and tie, professional

Mrs. Allen: first grade teacher, long 1920's style of dress, sunbonnet

CL: student- intelligent, clean, well dressed

Crook: student, polio victim, walks with a serious limp, intelligent, plain but neatly dressed

Fish: student, intelligent- very opinionated, plain but neatly dressed, brogans, clean cut

Gene Coffee: student - intelligent- well dressed, glasses

Mary Cromarty: student - dresses in an academy student's outfit, intelligent in appearance.

Beau Weible: student - bibbed overalls, brogans, colored tee shirt, average intelligent, very street smart

Tonya Timora: student - pallid sullen complexion, plain dressed, faded jeans, tee shirt.

Chris the Hippie : YaHoo- student- unkempt long hair, ragged clothes, fails his grade, horrible antagonistic attitude, caustic personality.

Airic Linberger: YaHoo - student - sidewall Squiggy-styled hair, ragged jeans and flannel clothing, never washes, flunked two grades.

Fatso: YaHoo, ragged, overweight - ragged clothes, unintelligent, flunks two grades

Tiny Teresa Tin Pecker: student - well dressed - academy student's outfit- intelligent-bashful

Jimmy Tin Pecker: student - very well dressed - clean cut - intelligent- very street savvy

Leon the Flea-back: student- gray green skin, lizard like face, scaly skin, lizard tail hanging behind, flunks a grade

Zebby the Flea-back: student -gray green skin, lizard like face, scaly skin, lizard tail hanging, flunks a grade.

Marvin the Flea-back: student - overweight - Grey green skin, lizard like face, scaly skin, lizard tail hanging, flunks a grade..

Tammy Two Step: student- academy dress uniform style clothes.

Curtis Curleyhead: student - jeans and tee shirt, average intelligence, pleasant personality

Sandy Slinky: student- well dressed - intelligent- blond ponytails

Norma Bently: student - slow - serious limp, mentally slow - blond hair, pallid skin, blue eyes

Cynthia the Flea-back: student- gray green skin, very overweight, academy girl dress, lizard like face, scaly skin, lizard tail hanging

Lisa Lamedame: student, slow, red hair, slightly overweight, stutters

Donna Darling: student - witch- swarthy complexion, straight As, wears dark long dresses & a pointed hat- shoulder length black hair- very attractive.

Darwell the Flea-back: student- rags, worn out sandals, gray green face, scaly skin, lizard-like face, lizard tail hanging in rear

Deneane Demoneillie: academy school girl dress. Student and church patron, average intelligence, quiet

Alex Fickle: Church attendant, distant, aloof

Lonnie Laggard: Church attendant, avoids physical exertion, stupidly playful

Jeanie Sunshine: Mrs. McDowell's niece, faded clothing, very attractive face and body, ragged denim coveralls, brogans, very intelligent

Twyla Clothcutter: student, expensive dresses, wears glasses, straight A grades

Act One

Scene 1:

(Setting)

Morning arrives at a small 20x20 wood framed school house on the edge of a scattered oak wood stand. A soupy fog whitens the land, hanging heavily onto the wood framed building. One at a time fifty (or twelve on stage) child students walk up homemade brick steps, across a wood planked porch, through double wooden doors, into an open one room classroom divided by a waist high bookcase running two thirds of the way across the floor. The book case is filled with Jump Sally Jump reading books, Captain Kangaroo Spelling and writing books, Mickey Mouse Club Math books, Doctor Seuss sleepy time reading books, science text books about the latest Sputnic space technology and the new transistor radio, for first and second grade.

The Head Master's Wife, Mrs McNeil, stands proudly on the porch beside the opened doors in her fancy straw sunbonnet with the wide pink ribbon, wearing a white and calico ankle length Edwardian Jacket Dress. She greets the students warmly with a smile as they pass over the door threshold.

Mrs. McNeil: Good Morning students.

Tammy Two Step: (*smiles*) Good Morning teacher.

Curtis Curlyhead: (*smiles*) Good Morning teacher.

Gene Coffee: Good Morning teacher

Several more students walk past Mrs. McNeil behind Tammy, Curtis, and Gene. They all take their seats according to the grade they are in. The division on the side of the bookcase opposite the door is second grade. A few from 3rd and 4th grades are mixed in. Curtis and Gene take their seats at desks in the division closest to the door. Tammy walks over to the opposite area where the second grade is.

On the wooden porch left of the steps sits CL, Crook, and Fish. A long blue Marquis Mercury drives up close to the wood plank porch. The passenger door opens suddenly. Out jumps Beau Weible. .

Beau Weible (*as he is excitedly running);* How is it Fish? I know you from church.

Crook:(*gasps*) Fancy you being here!

Beau Weible: I remember you, Crook, from Center Road Christian Academy. What are you doing here, boy?

Fish: Why, he's doing the same thing here we are, for crying out loud!

Crook: Yeah, boy, I'm doing the same thing here you are! Do you remember that big chicken-snake Mr. Meyers found in the hedge bushes at our old school?

Beau Weible: Yeah, sure do, and the way he popped that snake's head off by snapping his tail like a whip! I remember more, all of them beatin's he gave ole William Little with that thick razor strop and that fish shaped wood paddle with the holes in it.

Crook: (*Chuckles}*; But somethin' was bad-wrong with that boy. Every day he was gettin' caught up in some deep doo-ey, I think. *(sighs,*) He was kinda- slow, if ya ask me.

Beau Weible: Yeah, the day before ole William was caught a-eatin' year old moldy cheese Mrs' Meyers tossed out the back door of the church house there the day before that.

Crook: (*smiles, chuckles*); I kin still hear them strops a-smackin' when Mr. Meyers caught hold of him.

Beau Weible: Do you miss the old school any, Crook?

Crook: Sort of. I still see the people we knew from time to time.

Beau Weible: *(Sighs, drops his head)*; I don't. I guess I'll never see any of 'em again.

Crook: Who do you miss most of all?

Beau Weible: Penny for sure, but then there is Lori too. I think I'll miss her.

Crook: Penny was that little playful girl with them curly-blond ponytails. I remember her very well. Her last name was Twistflax, I think.

Fish: Awe, listen to both of you little boys there now. He likes them girls, boys now, let me tell all of ya!!

Crook: *(rubs his right index finger over his left one as he speaks)* Yeah, shame, shame, shame on you-ones now.

Other students congregate in front of the porch by the one room schoolhouse. Through the standing oaks away from the small one room schoolhouse, is a small baseball field. Fish, CL, Crook, and Beau Weible walk away from the porch, over toward the edge of the woods overlooking the baseball field.

Beau Weible: What is this place?

Fish: This is the baseball field.

Crook: But I never see anybody playin' baseball hereabouts.

Fish: (*glares hard at Crook)* On Fridays at recess after lunchtime they do. Where have you been? *(both laugh*)

CL: I've smelt a whiff of rabbit-tobacco from time to time when you walked past me the other day, and thought I spied an acorn hull pipe with a grass stem earlier near you today, Crook. Shame on you boy, for not sharing with us.

Crook: I'll never tell!

Beau Weible: Do we have to play baseball around here on Fridays, if we don't want to?

Fish: No, but what else is there to do that's worth anything?

CL: We can walk around the field exploring the woods, the flowers, the grass, and who knows what else..

Fish: And get into trouble…

Crook: With who?

Fish: Them YaHoos would be a good place to begin with.

CL: You know it.

Beau Weible: Them YaHoos? Who are they?

CL: You'll find out, boy. We don't even mention their names around here.

Beau Weible: Well, I want to know.

CL: They never play ball or do anything they are supposed to. They always hang out on the other side of the ball field over there, next to the woods.

Crook: So you're talkin' 'bout big ole Klavin from Arizona territory, Chris the hippie, and his no-good brother, Fatso.

CL: And don't you dare leave out ole Airic Linburger from this pact of hungry wolves.

Beau Weible: What's so bad about these people?

Fish: They're all so big and tall because they failed at least two grades. They all wear raggedy old hand-me-down clothes, with patches sewn all over 'em. Some have these new fangled iron-on patches too, but Mumzie says they're not as good as the old cut-out and sew on ones.

CL: They all have rotten teeth since they never brush theirs. They never wash and smell like bandi-coot roadkill that's been whizzed on.

Crook: Yeah, I whizzed on my old dog once, and wouldn't pet him for a whole month! I know that smell, for sure!

Beau Weible: Well, in the summertime when we pole-raft down Jeffries Creek, me and some friends camp out on Booger Island there, where the creek splits, then meets up again. We all go more 'an a week without washin' then, to tell the truth. Sometimes we'll go a whole month, livin' in tents, huts , and off fish caught on set lines, nab-corn, robbins, and pigeons we shoot with our Daisy pellet guns we got at Christmas time. It's really fun playin' pirate, explorin' far and wide, an' a-roustin' all around as we please. I really like being uncivilized, to tell the truth about it. Growing up don't seem very exciting to me.

Fish: (sighs) But that's different. That's during summer break. We're all supposed to do them kind of things at that time. We ain't supposed to during school times, now.

CL: But them YaHoos are different now. They 're always a-tryin' to start trouble with us.

Crook: Yeah Beau-hump, even their sisters stink and look like witches. One even wears a hat like one. You seen her, Lisa, the one who keeps askin' dumb questions in class an' kin barely talk, since she stutters so much.

Fish: Don't you dare put down witches like that!

Crook: Hey boys, we didn't tell ole Beau here what we found yesterday…!

Beau: What did you-all find?

CL: We found some bones, dook-us. Big ole dry bones.

Beau: What kind O' bones, Hoss?

CL: (*flicks his eyes back and forth, shrugs)* Awe..I don't know.

Fish: They were some old cow bones, that's all. Grandpa told me this place was once a cow pasture a long time ago.

Beau: Wow! How long ago?

Fish:(*shrugs*) Beats me!

In the distance to the right: *Jingle, Jingle, Ring a ling*!

Crook: Don't look now boys, but we all gotta run!

CL: It's class time once more again. There's Mrs Allen and Mrs. McNeil a-ringin' the hand Jingle!

Crook, CL, Fish, and Beau Weible exit

Scene 2

CL, Crook, Fish, and Beau race toward the steps at the porch. The students standing in front of the porch begin walking up the steps in single file. CL, Crook, Fish, and Beau follow behind. CL begins to step past Mrs McNeil.

Mrs. McNeill: (*suddenly steps in front of CL. and the three behind him*);
What were you boys doing by the field yonder?

CL: Singing songs Mrs. McNeill, a-recitin' poetry, counting stones, ponderin' our wrongs, seeking notoriety. *(Smiles broadly)*

Mrs. McNeill: (*With a firm face);* That much I am sure of..! But anyway, all of you were about to-be-late for class.

Crook: (*smiles*) Good morning Mrs. McNeill.

Crook follows behind CL walking toward the desks on the side next to the door.

Fish: (*serious look*) Good morning Mrs. McNeill. (*walks past*)

Beau: Good morning Mrs. McNeill. (*walks past*)

Mrs. McNeil: All of you, get into that classroom now!

The students step in, seating themselves. Mrs. McNeill grabs both wooden double doors, pulling them together. The last few students sit down at their desks. The classroom clatter settles. Mrs. McNeill walks to the front of the classroom. Mrs. Allen in her ankle length dress with her flaming red hair tied up in a bun, steps up beside her.

Mrs. McNeill: Class, what is it in the world around us that we could question? Being able to question, then search out facts for answers, is part of the educational process. The scientific process was built upon that ability.

Gene Coffee: (*Raises his right hand. Mrs. Allen points directly toward him);* Why is the sky blue?

Mrs. Allen: That's a great question Gene. Now you will have to search out answers in the library later on.

Mrs. McNeill: That would be a great paper for a research project, Gene. Any more questions?

Thomas Adams: Where do mushrooms come from, since we have so many growing around this school house now?

Mrs. Allen: Good question as well, Thomas.

Mary Cromarty: *(Quickly raises her right hand. Mrs. Allen nods her head toward her);* Where do babies come from?

Jill, Gene, and Betty Rae, glance over at one another, snickering.

Mrs. McNeil: Great question Mary dear. We shall be in the library soon to investigate the answer to this and all questions. We will need this information to make notes for our papers to address these subjects.

Lisa Lamedame: *(Raises her right hand quickly. Mrs. Allen nods her head in her direction*); (stutters) Why do people tie yellow ribbons around old oak trees?

Mrs. Allen: Where have you heard of this custom, Lisa?

Lisa Lamedame:(*stutters*) From a song I hear'd on the radio.

Mrs. Allen: I have a transistor radio here. Lets flip the station to WOLH. They play the latest hits.

Mrs. Allen steps over toward her desk in the corner of the first grade side of the room. She picks up a small hand held transistor radio, snapping it on, then turns the knob with her right hand. A few fuzzy songs pop up. The Old Yellow Ribbon is soon playing.

Lisa Lamedame: *(stutters*) That's it! That's the one! That is the song tellin' us all about it!

Mrs. Allen: The song says if you still want me, then tie a yellow ribbon 'round the old oak Tree. Doesn't that song sound so nice and pleasant?

Lisa Lamedame: The man singing the song says he's been gone for three long years. (stutters) He says to his girl if he don't see the ribbon he'll hop on the bus, forget about Us, and she can put the blame on him.

Mrs. McNeil: It's still worth researching. Let us begin working on our morning starter.

Gene Coffee: Whut are we writin' about?

Mrs. McNeil: What we discussed in class yesterday.

Gene Coffee: But we have no paper teacher, only these sorry small chalkboards. I've complained to my Mumzie about this stuff, you know.

Mrs. McNeil: Well, for this project I have some new paper stacked up on the bookcase in the middle of the room here. Everybody can walk there and find it for themselves.

The class arises from their desks. The students walk toward the bookcase, finding the paper and picking up a piece one by one. They walk back to their seats , each behind the other.

Mrs. Allen: I'll find a replay of that song for you as you work.

Twists the knob on the transistor radio until the song pops up again.

Mrs. Allen: WOLH is the best station for sure, but we've located another one here.

The classroom silences as the students begin writing.

30 minutes later…

Jing a ling! Jing a ling! Jing a ling!

Mrs. McNeil rings the hand-bell again

Gene Coffee: Wow! I can't believe it's already time for morning break.

Twyla Clothcutter: Time passes when we stay busy, like we are always told.

Mrs. McNeil: (*Speaking from the front of the classroom)*; All of you know the protocol by now. Single file behind the door, please!

Students race up into line. When the last student steps into line, Mrs. McNeill opens the door on the right hand side. The students race across the porch, down the steps, into the yard. Some students hang around on the porch and the steps. Other students scamper out into the yard. Beau, CL, Crook, and Fish walk over toward the baseball field. They pause on the edge of the oak stand.

CL: Time can't pass fast enough for me.

Fish: Me either, but I'm not rushin' it.

Beau: Yeah, I'm takin' it as it comes, like Pap 'N Mumzie always tells me.

Crook: I can sing in my mind to make the time pass for me.

A shy behaving slim dark haired girl moves from the front of the old wood framed schoolhouse, toward the boys.

CL: Hmm, boys, who is this?

Fish: What-a-ya know, maybe it's a witch on the hunt.

Crook: I bet I know who her prey is. (*Crook faces Beau rubbing his right index finger across his left)* Shame, shame, shame!

The somewhat thin girl steps up, raising her head, facing Beau with a smile.

Beau: Hello Peanuts, how do you do?

Peanuts: Fairly well, thank you.

Beau: (*Smiling as he speaks*); It's been a while now, no talk, no see. Remember the other day back at the old school, Peanuts?

Peanuts: When the headmaster pulled us into his office?

Beau: Yeah…(*smiles, shrugs, chuckles*)

Peanuts: I remember what happened that got us both in there, naughty boy. You know, he called our Mums, don't you?

Beau: What did your'n say?

Peanuts: *(face droops)* She whooped me good, and tole me not to ever speak with the likes of bad boys like rotten ole you!

Crook: Listen to the stir now boys! Some news be in-there! What happened, Beau now?

Beau: Like grand-Pap tells me, never let your right hand know what your left hand is doing.

Beau steps off to the side with Peanuts.

Fish: (*gazing toward Beau and Peanuts*) Ooh wee, now look at 'em go!

CL: Ooh wee, the sun is a-shinin' Hoss! !

Crook: Something 's a-stir, now boys!

Beau: (*turns in Peanuts direction*) Tell me, now Peanuts.

Peanuts: I tole you, boy. You never listen to anybody. That's yer problem. Pap says Clan Weible is known for not listening, and bein' downright hard-headed.

Beau: Your Mumsie really said that to you?

Peanuts: Yeah, she did. What did your'n say?

Beau: First she cried, then hacked me for doin' what the Flea-backs told me to do.

Peanuts: Yeah, my Mumzie didn't like that part either. She says she's glad there's not but five in our whole school.

Beau: Gosh dang it though, I'd O' done it anyway, Peanuts. It wasn't bad!

Peanuts smiles, gazing directly over at him.

Beau: I'd do it all over again now, to tell the truth about it. (*glances around nervously)* I've gotta go now, Peanuts!

Peanuts: Yeah, I gotta too. See ya later!

Peanuts exits.

Beau walks back toward the boys.

Crook: Naughty, naughty now, Beau-pop. What was that all about, ole hambone?

Fish: Humm (*chuckles*) Is he talking?

CL: Yeah, that boy has things to tell us, rat-heel, and nigh!

From the woods across the ballfield, a lone lanky male figure heads their way. The boys glance up quickly..

Crook: What, oh what, do I spy with my eye, boys?

Fish: Looks like a long tall YaHoo to me!

CL: Which one, or does it even matter making a difference between 'em?

Fish: I think it's Airic.

Crook: It'll smell like him soon, fer shore.

The tall figure walks across the ballfield, up to the boys. He wears patched over blue jeans. He has a flat top haircut. He wears a baggy flannel shirt with worn holes all in it. He wears a brown ragged floppy hat. He smells as if he hasn't bathed in days.

CL: (*holding his nose*) Gosh boys, is it human?

Fish: (*holding his nose*) Of course not, it's a YaHoo!

Crook: *(holding his nose*) Oh no, it's Airic Linberger!

Airic Linberger: *(a gruff voice, hard glare, smirks);* Your toast, bo diddley boy.

Beau: Me? What ‘s my crime? (*shrugs)* I’m new ‘round hiah..!

Airic Lindberger: You think you ‘r so hot ‘round here already. I don’t see any-thang so great about you. Neither does the real people out here (*waves his left hand toward the woods across the ball field)*

Beau: What? Me? I don’t get it.

Airic Lindberger: (*smirk)*; Well boy, you will. This is our turf here. No foreigner can come in here and take over, like it seems to us where you think you can. We got-chor number, Didley! We know how to make you scream for mercy. Soon us real people ‘ll own this place round here. Don’t believe me? Wait and see!

Beau: We? We who?

Airic smiles his smirk

Fish: I see him hangin’ ‘round them Flea-backs. That’s who I think it is.

Crook: Or others like him. All of ‘em deserve what they get.

CL: (*glancing toward Airic*) We’re ready for whatever.

Airic Linberger: Well, (*smirks*) we got chor number, Didley, and you’ll be hearin’ from us real soon.

Airic Lindbergfer exits.

Crook: We need to be careful out there boys.

Fish: Seems like he’s after you, ole Beau boy there!

Beau: (*shrugs*) I’m not worried about it.

Crook: (smiles) Tell us about that girl.

Beau: It happened back at Center Road Christian Academy.

Fish: What was her name now?

Beau: Peanuts.

The other three laugh.

CL: What kinda name is that?

Beau: She's-a-Lewis. That's all I know. I don't know why in-smack ever-body calls her Peanuts.

Crook: Well, what in the name of Golly Molly happened?

Beau: And nobody said nothin'. Nothin' said, nothin' known, so the answer is nothin'.

Fish: We're all in. You're not goin' to tell us, oh Beau-pop?

Beau: I haven't even seen her for awhile now. I didn't even know she was going to school here.

CL: She started coming here last month. She seems so quiet, and never says much.

Fish: (*smiles*) This reminds me of a poem Mrs. Allen made us remember not long ago.

Crook: What a tangled web we weave, when only we practice to deceive.

Crook, Beau, CL, Fish, exit the sage

Scene 3

Mrs. McNeill: (On school house porch, shaking handbell); *Jing a ling! Jing a ling! Jing a*

ling! It's class time! It's class time

The students line up single file at the steps of the old wood framed schoolhouse. Mrs. McNeill turns and opens the right hand door. She steps to her right when her back is to the door, facing the students. The students walk in single file one at a time, taking their seats at their proper desks. The last one steps inside. Mrs. McNeil closes the door. The students settle down. Mrs. McNeil and Mrs. Allen walk to the front of the classroom.

Mrs. McNeil: All of us have our own questions to research here. If you don't, then research the reason why yellow ribbons are often tied on old oak trees. So now students we are going to line up and walk over to the school library building, back up the driveway outside, and over to the right from where you turn to come in here. Now, I'm going to warn all of you. Don't you dare give Miss McDowel any trouble in there, or else! So let us line up now!

The students line up row by row, single file by the door of the old wood framed schoolhouse. The last student steps up. Mrs. McNeil opens the door. The students walk in perfect single file down the dirt driveway, branching right. Ahead is a small 20 x 40 time and weather worn wooden warehouse. This is the school library.

Gene Coffee: Mrs. McNeil, why can't your husband invest in us some new books, buildings, and things? We want new, up to date things. We don't even have paper and pencils around here!

Mrs. McNeil: Well, we all know your father owns the drug store over there in our little town and is the only druggist for miles around, but the rest of us are too poor to afford it. The old Bethel Township is a poor precinct located in an undeveloped county. We simply can't afford it. *Besides that Gene, the pioneers would have loved to possess what we are blessed with here now. What would have been good for them, is fine for us.*

Beau suddenly stops walking. Twyla Clothcutter rushes up hard against him from behind. Twyla backs up with an astonished expression on her face.

Beau: *(turns, smiling broadly*) Sorry Twyla, a stone is in my shoe, I think. That's better than yellow jackets, like I got in my shoes at the other school.

Twyla: *(angry expression on her face); Frankly Beau*, I think you are mad, bad, and if you don't mind me saying so, rather dangerous to know!

Beau: Surely a real lady after my own heart!

Twyla: You ‘re not right! Why don’t you walk? The line moves ahead yonder, boy.

Beau: Not a bad idea, if one should ask me.

Beau turns and begins walking forward.

The line makes it to the library. Mrs. McNeil is at the front. Mrs. Allen is bringing up the rear. Mrs. McNeil knocks on the door. An elderly woman wearing a hair bun and an ankle length 1880s styled long sleeved dress opens the door. The students step up inside, taking their seats at the tables, 6 to a table. Beau, CL, Crook, Fish, and Twyla sit at one table. Twyla sits beside Fish. Beau sits on the opposite side with an empty chair beside him on his right, across from Fish and Twyla. Crook and CL sit at the ends. Slowly a hooded feminine figure walks up. She eases into the empty chair beside Beau. The students are seated and settling. Miss McDowel stands before them in the center of the room, with the librarian’s desk behind her.

Miss McDowel: Class, now I shouldn’t need to remind you, but there ‘s absolutely no talking in the library. Any person not willing to respect this in my library can leave now…. All of you have work to do, so let us be on it.

The students commence stirring around. They move from the tables to the book shelves, then back to the tables.

Beau: (*turns to his right side)* You walked up fast enough, I should say.

Peanuts: Why not? The chair was empty, boy

Beau: (*smiles*) Frankly my dear, I’m glad that you did.

Peanuts: (*smiles)* Me too. Did the others mind?

Beau: (*shrugs*) I don’t care if they did.

Beau eases his right hand underneath the table onto Peanut’s left hand laying in her lap. They clasp hands slowly.

Peanuts: (*whispers, worried expression*); Beau not now, what if we get into trouble?

Beau: Last time we were on the back seat of a church activity bus with some Flea-backs.They were cheering us both on, remember?

Peanuts: They didn't make us do anything. You were going to do it anyway. I know you, Beau boy!

Beau: Why do we have to go to school with Flea-backs anyway?

Peanuts: Mum talks about that all the time. Gramps says the country will soon fall apart because of it.(*sighs)* Mumsie 'N gramps says they didn't have to, so why do we?

Beau: *(shrugs*) Nobody knows, except that we do. Uncle says the Bermeister tells us we have to, so we just do it. That's why.

Peanuts: Who in the world is that?

Beau: I don't know! He tells everybody what to do. That's all I know.

Miss. McDowel silently walks up behind Beau and Peanuts. She suddenly lays her left hand on Beau's right shoulder. She lays her right hand on Peanut's left shoulder. Both are startled, glancing backward and upward.

Miss. McDowel: *(grimacing hard face)* You two must stop this physical activity and this talking.

Peanuts: (*Disturbed and worried)*; O.K. Miss McDowel.

Beau: *Looks upward into her face, smiling..*

Miss. McDowel: *(sighs*); Here, I have an idea that will work. *(grabs Peanut's left arm firmly)* You, come with me, Miss Jezabelle. .

Peanuts arises from her seat

Beau: No, please Miss McDowel, we'll be quiet and won't hold hands any more, I promise!

Peanuts hesitates

Miss. McDowel: No, fickle Jezebelle! Come with me now, gal. Time's a wastin'!

Peanuts reluctantly walks with Miss. McDowel. She takes a seat three tables over from where Beau sits. CL, Fish, Crook, and Twyla Clothcutter glance over at one another, smiling. Mrs. McDowel walks back over toward the librarian's checkout desk at the front of the library. She commences removing paper, one sheet at a time, from a large stack. All is now totally silent in the library.

Crook *(whispering)*; What was that all about, Beau boy, now?

Beau: *sits smiling, gazing toward Miss McDowell*.

Time Passes...

Beau scribbles something on a small ripped shred of paper. He abruptly arises from his seat at the table. He walks back toward Peanuts, dropping the note before her. She picks the note up. She opens it. The printed note instructs her to get at the back of the line when library time ends.

More time passes..

All remain quiet. Miss. McDowel suddenly arises from the librarian's checkout desk, stepping out a ways from the front of the checkout desk.

Miss. McDowel: Everybody line up now. It's time to go already. It will be lunch time by the time we make it back to the school house.

The class places all books down on the tables where they are sitting. The students line up one by one at the door. Peanuts is the last student in line. Beau steps up in front of her nonchalantly, with an intelligent smirk on his face.

Miss. McDowel: Everybody now, follow me, like we always do.

Exits out the door at front of the line

Beau: *(Holds his left hand up in front of Peanuts, whispers*) Wait, don't say a word.

The student ahead of Beau walks out without glancing backwards. He flips the light switch. He closes the door on his way out. The room is dark.

Beau: *(Whispers);* See now, I told you I have it all under control.

Peanuts: (*Gasps, out of breath from fright and shock); How now, crazy boy?*

Beau: *(whispers)*; Now it's you and me only.

Peanuts: I'm scared Beau.

Beau: Don't be. I'm not gonna hurt you. Our eyes will find light before long.

Peanuts: *(disturbed expression*) We got into trouble last time, boy.

Beau: I blame it all on them Flea-backs.

Peanuts: Flea-backs ain't here now.

Beau hugs Peanuts closely, kissing her lightly on the cheek.

Peanuts: Beau now… Shame on you, bad boy!

Beau pulls her closer, kissing her again on the cheek…

Peanuts: Flea-backs, eh?.....

Beau kisses her again on the cheek.

Instantly the door opens. A sudden explosion of light blinds the two. Miss. McDowel boldly strides across the threshold. She snaps the light switch, slamming the door closed. A hard rigid expression is on her face.

Curtains fall, lights gradually dim

Scene 4

Miss. McDowel: (*Shaking her finger as she speaks);* Ah ha! I caught the both of you in action, did I not? Who do you children think you are? We can have none of this stuff around here. None of this commotion now!

Miss. McDowel grabs both children by the right and left arms. She yanks them both along towards the door. Peanuts commences sobbing loudly.

Miss. McDowel: Come with me children. First we're going to march over to that school house. Then we're going to visit Mr. McNeil. Then after he strops both of you down good, we're calling your Mums. That's what we shall do, I'm telling both of you! I'm sure they'll be happy to hear of this matter.

Miss. McDowel, Peanuts, and Beau walk down the narrow dirt driveway in the direction of the school house. Miss McDowell is in the center, with a child in either hand. They make a sharp left from the library. The kids walk up the steps, onto the porch, up to the door. Miss McDowel walks up to the door behind them, knocking firmly. The door opens. Mr. and Mrs. McNeil are standing there with both arms folded.

Mrs. McNeil: How now, what have we here?

Mr. McNeil: Two teeny dove birds stirring up loads of trouble for us to deal with, I see.

Peanuts: (*Sobbing);* But we didn't do anything bad!

Mrs. McNeil: *(hard expression)* What on earth have you got to say for yourself, young man?

Beau: (*smiles, opens arms with palms up*) Blame me, I'm at fault. It's all on me. She done nothing.

Mrs. McNeil: (*hands on both hips*) What boy? Both of you are guilty, far as I am concerned.

Beau: She done nothing, I tell you! It's all my fault. I put her up to it.

Mr. McNeil: Son, what do you mean when you say she's innocent?

Beau: I talked her into it, so let her go and I'll take the fall!

Mr & Mrs. McNeil, and Miss. McDowel glance-over toward one another. Nobody says a word.

Mr. McNeil: (*sighs, pointing)* Both of you walk over to the back room and eat your lunch.

Beau and Peanuts walk over to the small back room. The other students are sitting on the floor with their lunch boxes opened, eating lunch. Beau and Peanuts grab their own two lunch boxes from a bookcase. A space at the left-hand wall by the window is available. The two sit on the floor with the others. Some students are outside with the back door open, sitting on the steps eating their lunches. Mrs. Allen stands on the grass watching with both hands on her hips.

Beau has his lunch box with the Partridge Family on it. Peanuts has her's with Snow White and The Seven Dwarves on it. Inside both boxes are apples, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches wrapped in white paper napkins, and pull-top cans of pepsi. Beau has cheese doodles in a small plastic sandwich bag. Peanuts has barbecue ruffles-potato chips in a small clear plastic sandwich bag.

Beau: (smiling) I always did love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Peanuts: (smiling) Me too, especially the crunchy kind.

Beau: Looks like you got potato chips.

Peanuts: Yeah, a few. I like barbeque.

Beau: Can I have some of yours? I'll trade you some cheese doodles for some.

Peanuts: Why don't you ask that other girl for some?

Beau: (*huffs*) What other girl? Where?

Peanuts: The one with the long black hair I saw you talking with the other day.

Beau: You mean Donna Darlin'?

Peanuts: I guess that's her name…(*pouting expression*)

Beau: Well now, she's the wicked witch, I tell you!

Peanuts: (*hard look*) Why-you call her that, boy?

Beau: She has an old pot out back she found in a trash pile down in the woods, and is always cooking up spells in it at recess. You hat-n't seen that?

Peanuts: No, but she sure is a pretty witch, boy. I've seen that!

Beau: Naw Peanuts, you're crazy like one! Witches are old and ugly. She's not that pretty, I tell you.

Peanuts: Well do tell! If the witches don't get you, then the YaHoo 'N the Flea-backs surely will!

Beau: Flea-backs don't dare mess with the likes of me, girl!

Peanuts: Well they will, boy, you just wait, and them YaHoos 'll be right in there with 'em when the time comes.

Beau: Aw, I'm not worried a bit, now gal! Look at me, Peanuts (*holds his arm up, grabs his right bicep)* I'm all fire and muscle!

Peanuts: I hear you a-talkin' yer honey-pot full. I tell ya that much.

Beau and Peanuts complete their lunch. They close up their tin boxes. They toss away their trash into a nearby can. They place their boxes back onto the bookshelf. The other students put their boxes up on the same shelf. They head outside through the back door. Beau and Peanuts step into the restroom. They step back out into the classroom. Mr. and Mrs. McNeil are waiting for them by the restroom doors.

Mrs. McNeil: (*glaring down hard)* You stay right here, gal, and go on outside with the others.

Peanuts exits

Mr. McNeill: (*glancing down, scowl on his face)* Boy, you follow me, son. We've a serious bone to pick.

The two walk out the back door, down the steps, and on farther back toward the woods. Mr. McNeil walks closely behind. Beau swallows hard.

Beau: Where are we going? Woods are thick. Snakes make me a-feared.

Mr. McNeil: Keep on walking forward, son. Don't ask questions.

Beau: Toward that old shed yonder, in them teeny scrub-oak trees?

Mr. McNeil: That's right, boy. Say nothing, (*pointing*) forward march, son!

Beau: *Sighs deeply.*

The three walk toward the shack ahead where the wood is cut, split, and stacked for the woodstove in the school house. Mr. McNeil carries a very flexible plum twig in his right hand.

Mr. McNeil: Son, you're gonna learn we got rules here at Virginia Dare Academy. We can't ignore what you did. Do you know what you did?

Beau: No, not really. What was so wrong about anything?

Mr. McNeil: Well, it's high time you learn. When one of us tells you to do something 'round hiah, then you N' ever-body else is gonna do it. You or nobody else round hiah, is gonna sluff about doing it. You hear me talking to you, boy?

Beau: Yeah.

Mr. McNeil: That 's sir, to you boy!

Beau: Yes sir, then!

Mr. McNeil: Now son, you bend over that wood pile there in front O' you, and hold on for dear life, 'cause I swear I'm gonna knock you slam into the trees yonder, if I can, so help me good-Lord in heaven above!

Beau sighs deeply. He bends over the wood pile. Mr. McNeil cuts him twelve sharp times with the switch. Beau squints hard, but never flinches. Mr. McNeil finishes switching him. Beau strains to stand straight again. He brushes himself off. He forces himself to smile.

Mr. McNeil: (*glares hard in astonishment*) Now boy, you go along and play with the Others, (*points*) and don't you dare get into trouble again.

Beau takes off running toward the school house yard. Beau runs out past the school house, back over to the edge of the woods where his friends Cl, Crook, Fish, and Gene are standing on the woods edge overlooking the baseball field.

Gene Coffee: How now boys. Look what runs up on us here.

Fish: The bunny honey had his fluffy tail clipped.

CL: Clipped with a plum whip too, I should say.

Crook: (*smiles)* We may only dream of the reason why.

Beau: How now, saucy dogs!

Fish: Nothing, only talking.

Beau: 'Bout what? (*smiling inquisitively*)

CL: Plum whips and such.

Crook: Thunk we hear'd one a-smackin' down in the woodshed yonder ways.

Beau: (*Glances down, then back up, shrugs)*; maybe.

Gene Coffee: Did you talk with her?

Beau: Who?

Gene Coffee: Why, your little ditty whitty, that's who.

Beau: In passing only.

Crook: (*chuckles)*; What happened, puddin' pie?

Beau: Oh nothin', be quiet!

Fish: (*chuckles in sarchasm*) Well, your nuttin' shore got you a good ice whoopin', boy. We all know that much !

All the boys laugh.

Beau: (*glancing down, back up*) My secret, your wonder, but my stress about anything is over with now. All of you can have that for me.

Fish: (*sighs deeply*) Anyway fellers, he's forgiven for his sins. Let's all lay off.

Beau: Let's all play something. We still have time.

Crook: Lets play on the Merry Go Round on the opposite side of the ball field!

The boys run across the ball field. They grab the Merry Go Round in different sections where the seats are, running clockwise.

Fish: Lets get it going fast, now my saucy boys!

CL: Yeah, real fast now!

Crook: Faster than this, for sure!

Gene Coffee: Let's make it go so fast it gives us a good buzz!

Beau: We'll be drunk from all this goin' round 'N 'round soon.

All five boys quit running, jumping down to ride it around.

Fish: Wow, this is really fun!

Beau: I always did like these things.

Crook: It's slowing back down now boys.

Gene Coffee: I'd rather play wiffle ball on the pole yonder!

CL: Did you say one on the pole?

Gene Coffee: Yeah boy, see it yonder? *(pointing*) Let's go!

All four boys run toward the wiffle ball on the poll off thirty feet to the side. Beau remains behind. He pushes the Merry Go Round. Somebody approaches behind him. He snaps around.

Flea-back: (*walking up*) Let's play, boy!

Beau: (leaps up, backing away, gasps) You look so weird to me! I mean, look at your scaly gray-green skin and your ugly lizard-like face. I'll say, you have some big sharp pointed ears and a small snout filled with sharp teeth. Where do you live-at anyway? I always hear'd you and your kind live in stick huts way down yonder somewhere in the woods, and them sticks are covered with horse dookie and mud.

Flea-back: *(Hard face*) Yeah? Well, I think you and your kind look weird too. Why on earth does Bermista ever say we had to go to school with you and yo gross go-rilla lookin' kind?

Beau:(sneers his upper lip) Who are you anyway?

Flea-back: Name 's Darwell, ta you, boy.

Beau: I don't know you. Where did you come from?

Darwell the Flea-back: I'm right there in your classroom, dook-poot! Let's play, boy.

Beau: Ok. I'll play with you. Let's go..

Beau begins pushing the Merry Go Round clockwise.

Darwell the Flea-back: No boy, get away from here! (*he shoves Beau away from the Merry Go Round*) We're going to push this thing this way!

The Flea-back pushes the Merry Go Round counter clockwise.

Beau: No boy, that's not right! If you ain't gonna do it right, then don't do it at all!

Beau grabs the ragged clothing of the Flea-back. Beau shoves him backward from the Merry Go Round. The Flea-back rushes over, grabbing Beau, pulling him back away from the Merry Go Round.

Beau: (*Screaming in rage);* That's what I hate about all of you. All any of you want to do is throw yer weight around and cause everybody else a bunch of trouble! Why do any of us have to go to school with the likes of you and them YaHoos?

The two trade punches. They make their way toward a clump of well trimmed yaupon hedge bushes out thirty feet from the playground area. The two fall into the bushes, struggling. The Flea-back gets on top of Beau. He sits up firmly on his chest.

Darwell the Flea-back: Now I've got you, you dirty rotten thievin' human! What are you goin' to do now?

Beau turns his head to the right side, closing his eyes, fully expecting to take a hard punch into the left side of his head.

Darwell the Flea-back: You're gonna do what I tell you to do, boy, that's what!

Beau: *(Praying to himself in a whisper, eyes pinched tightly);* Please Lord, show me the way out of this mess.

Beau opens his eyes. A tin pie pan is nestled in six inch high grass, with a large coil of fresh human fecal material wound into the center. Beau seizes the Flea-back's ragged flowery shirt with his right hand. He shakes him hard as a distraction. He seizes the loaded tin pie pan with his left hand. The Flea-back glances around to see what is heading toward him. Beau smashes the loaded pie pan hard directly into the Flea-back's face. The Flea-back slides off of his chest. Beau rubs the loaded pan all over his scaly face, being very careful to get it directly in his mouth and eyes. The Flea-back rolls from on top of his chest, spitting, gasping, screaming, and crying. Beau leaps up. He leaps backwards a few steps, out of any potential harm's way.

Darwell the Flea-back: Look what you've done to me! I hate you, filthy human!

Beau smiles at the Flea-back. Mrs. McNeil walks up to the playground suddenly from the school house.

Darwell the Flea-back: (*races hysterically forward)* Mrs. McNeil, look what he did to me!

Mrs. McNeil: Who did this to you?

Darwell the Flea-back: (*pointing toward Beau)* That human yonder did this to me!

Mrs. McNeil: Well, you run back to the school house and get cleaned up, and we'll call your Mumsie.

Mrs. McNeill: (*walks over, grabbing Beau hard by the left bicep)* Did you do this to him, boy?

Beau: (*smiles*); You always did say for us to take up for ourselves, Mrs. McNeill, so I did!

Mrs. McNeil: Come with me, boy, back to that school house. (shaking her head) I declare I've ne'er seen the likes in all my years of teachin'. You'll be grounded for at least a week.

Mrs. McNeil and both students exit

Scene 5

Several Weeks later….

School lets out. A small yellow school bus sits out by the paved road at the end of the dirt driveway. Several older students are on this bus from the upper-grade building, across from the library, in the back Beau and Fish don't know.

Fish has a much older sister attending school in the upper-grade building. She is riding the bus. When the other kids see her, they make a cross sign with their two index fingers. A thin, pale looking girl with dark brown hair, appearing wet and black when it does, enters the bus. Smiling warmly, she saunters over toward Beau. She sits down in the seat beside him.

Girl: Hello there, good lookin'. I noticed you sitting there, and I couldn't help but walk over and speak. How are you?

Beau: I'm fine, what about you?

Girl: I'm getting along well. Who is your teacher?

Beau: Mrs. McNeil and Mrs. Allen.

Girl: Wow! Those ladies are fine teachers. I remember my days in their class. I had

loads of fun back then, let me tell you. I've noticed you around there. How long have you been coming to school out here?

Beau: A few weeks.

Girl: A few weeks only? And you have all of these little girl friends? I've heard about it, you know. Word gets around.

Beau: Naw, not really. I don't have any girl friends.

Girl: What's your name, you good lookin' thing, you?

Beau: Beau.

Girl: Beau what?

Beau: Beau Weible. What's your's?

Girl: Beau Weible? That sounds like such a cool name! My name is Tonya, Tonya Timorous. Some people call me Tonya Fruit Loop, or Tonya Taboo, but that's a long story honey, for later on in time.

Beau: Wow, I've never heard of a name like that.

Tonya Timorous: (*smiles, chuckles*) Let me tell ya honey, it's a good name, 'cause I'm such a great person.

Beau: I hope so. We have enough YaHoos 'round here, let me tell you.

Tonya Timorous: YaHoos! You're so funny, little boy. What's a YaHoo?

Beau: You don't know?

Tonya Timorous: Never heard of such.

Beau: Do you like Flea-backs?

Tonya Timorous: Now, I've heard of them. They just started coming to our school way back when I was in first grade, over in the same building you are.

Beau: What grade are you in now?

Tonya Timorous: I'm old to you, honey. I'm way up in the fourth grade. I'll be in fifth not long in the future.

The bus screeches to a halt. Several students exit off. The bus rides along more. More students exit off. Fish and his sister exit off at his elegant doric columned mansion home tucked away from the hard surfaced road in the woods.

Fish: *(As he exits off the bus);* See ya 'round Beau. Don't get into more trouble now.

Other students on the bus: Make the cross sign with their index fingers toward Fish's sister.

Beau: Ay-dios now. You know I won't.

The bus motors along. The bus stops. Tonya arises.

Tonya Timorous: *(sighs)*; The yellow cheese wagon has halted. Will ya still be mine when I get back on in the morning? Or tomorrow afternoon?

Beau: Yeah, I'll be right here.

Tonya Timorous: Tootle-lue now, doll. Nice meeting you!

Beau: Yeah, I'll see ya around.

Tonya exits

Beau watches as Tonya walks off the school bus. Her faded cut off jeans tightly hug her narrow thighs, dancing along out the bus as she walks. Her plain black tee shirt and homemade sandals blend in well together. She exits off at a long narrow two rut road, reaching far down into tall standing oak, sycamore, poplar, and birch trees. The road turns sharply to the right in the distance.

Beau: *(Whispering out loud);* Where on earth is her house at? What kind of home does she live-in?

A few more weeks pass…

The bus picks Beau up at home. The bus pauses by the mailbox at this long narrow two rut road. Tanya Timorous enters. She sits down closely beside Beau.

Tonya Timorous: Well, here we are again. I feel I have known you for so long now.

Beau: We have learned much in our talk.

Tonya Timorous: Are you staying out of trouble?

Beau: Of course! I never get into trouble.

Tonya Timorous: That's not what I hear.

Beau: Well, almost never. I told you about this fight I got in with a Flea-back, didn't I?

Tomya Timorous: No, tell me all about it. I can't wait to hear about this now!

Beau: A big Flea-back walked up to me and shoved me away from the Merry Go Round. So we got into it.

Tonya Timorous: So what did you do?

Beau: You know where them-bushes are out from the Merry Go Round, right?

Tonya Timorous: (*chuckles)* Yeah, sure…

Beau: He gets me down in there and sits on my chest.

Tonya Timorous: (*gasps*) So what did you do then?

Beau: I prayed.

Tonya Timorous: *(laughing);* Were your prayers answered?

Beau: You darn tootin' they were. I looked over and saw a tin pie pan with a big snake of hockey wound right into the center!

Tonya Timorous: *(gasps)*; So what did you do then?

Beau: I grabbed his ragged shirt with my right hand, then hit him square in the face with

the pan on my left!

Tonya Timorous: *(laughs uncontrollably)*; Oh my gosh, little boy, I can't believe you here!

Beau: Yeah, I really did that.

Tonya Timorous: Did your Mumzie find out?

Beau: Yeah, but she didn't do anything, since I won the fight. Had I lost she'd have whooped me for sure.

Tonya Timorous: That's so wild little boy.. (*laughing*) I've never heard of such a thing!

Beau: Well, you have now.

Tonya Timorous: (*smiling broadly while she stares at Beau);* So let me ask you something personal, here and now. When are you going to be my little boyfriend? I hear about your other little girl friends, but I have the ups on all of them now. I can tell you that much, for sure.

The short school bus slows, coming to a stop at the intersection between the library and the school house. Two buses are parked by the building where the upper grades are located. Students are exiting off these buses.

Tonya Timorous: Well, it's about that time again. I'll see you around. You can answer me later on.

Tonya exits the school bus

Beau: Yeah, I'll see you again this afternoon, if not sooner.

Beau exits the bus. He walks down the two rut dirt driveway to the old wood framed schoolhouse by himself. The other kids are congregating in front of the steps at the porch. He and Tonya are last getting off the bus. The schoolhouse door suddenly opens. Mrs. McNeil steps out onto the wooden planks, shaking her hand-bell for class to begin.

Jing a ling ring! Jing a ling ring! Jing a ling ring!

The students line up, walking one by one through the doorway past Mrs. McNeill

Mrs. McNeil: Good morning, hurry, classes will soon begin and you'll be late!

The students scatter. They take their seats at their proper desks. The desks are arranged in rows going across the room the short way, facing the chalkboard. Mrs. McNeil and Mrs. Allen stand before the chalkboard. The class quietens down.

Mrs. Allen: Class, before we commence with our lessons for the day, we have a special treat for you. I'm going to be doing a little presentation for you in company with yours truly!

Mrs. Allen holds her right hand out. Crook arises from his seat. He walks up to the front of the classroom wearing a broad smile. Mrs. Allen stoops down. She turns on a record player. A pleasant tune plays. The two commence moving in tune with the rhythm.

Mrs. Allen: (sings) When this old world gets me down and there's no love to be found, I close my eyes and soon I find I'm in a playground in my mind, where the children laugh and children play, and we sing good songs all day.

Crook: *(sings*) My name is Michael, I've got a nickel, I've got a nickel shiny and new. I'm gonna buy me-a load of candy, now that's what I'm gonna do.

Mrs. Allen: (*sings*) In the wonders that I find in the playground in my mind, in a big world that used to be, close your eyes now and follow me, where children laugh and children play and we sing songs all day.

Crook: (*sings*) My gal is Sherry, when we get married, we're gonna have a baby or two. We're gonna let 'em visit their grandma, now that's what we're gonna do.

Mrs. Allen: Sing along with us now! *(sings*) Living in a world that I left behind, happy little children in the playground in my mind. See the little children? See how they play in the playground in my mind?

The whole class: (*sings)* Tra la la la la la, our time is now, let us show you how, while we can play all day in the sweet sunshine.

Mrs. McNeil: Isn't that such a pretty song? It sure causes me to think long and hard about everything. It doesn't seem that long ago in the past, to Mrs. Allen and myself, for sure.

Norma Bently: What are we going to do today, teacher?

Mrs. Allen: We are going to write some poetry. You know, spring is getting closer. Easter time will be here soon. It seems like yesterday since we had Christmas.

Mrs. McNeil: Think about springtime and Easter. Think about clover and shamrock. Do all of you remember what the lucky clover looks like?

The whole classroom: That's the four leaf clover, Mrs. McNeil!

Mrs. McNeil: That's so right! Now green is the color of spring. You know, there is a country that loves green. It's an island. If you remember, an island is a piece of land surrounded by water. What island is that? Do you remember? I'll give you a hint. It's the island of Leprechauns and elves, artists and famous writers. What island is it?

The whole classroom: Ireland, Mrs. McNeil!

Mrs. McNeil: Ireland is our land, when we all get right down to it. Probably most of the people in this room had people who came over from Ireland. Surely a small piece of Ireland lives in us all! So, let's cultivate our celtic imagination! Go now to the bookshelf and grab a piece of paper.

The class lines up, single file by the book shelf in the center of the room. Each student grabs a piece of paper. The student walks back to his or her desk. They settle down.

Mrs. Allen: Now, let's see who can write the very best poem about spring time, family, Ireland, shamrocks, four leaf clover, leprechauns, or Easter. I will ask five of the eighth grade students who score the best in English to make anonymous selections. The students who write the best poems shall have their poetry submitted to The Times Messenger NewsPaper.

The class sits down. The students begin writing. Several students say they don't want to write. Mrs. McNeil allows them to draw and color. Beau is about halfway through writing his poem.

Jing a ling ring! Jing a ling ring! Jing a ling ring!

The door is already open. Miss. McNeil is standing on the porch, shaking the hand bell.

Norma Bently: (*slurs);* It's break time, let's go. I want to find me a four leaf clover!

Norma arises, staggering and muttering. She attempts to run out the door. The other students follow one by one, walking across the porch and down the steps, out into the yard surrounding the school house. Norma walks over to the picnic table in the woods edge in the direction of the small baseball field. Around the picnic table are Twyla Clothcutter, Gene Coffee, Lisa Lamedame, Crook, Beau, Peanuts, and Dona Darling. Norma Bently staggers and limps around the table.

Norma Bently: *(slurs);* The singing was good. You done fine, Crook boy!

Crook: Well, thankyou Norma. *(smiles)* Its so good of you to say kind things to me this morning.

Norma: Can I give you a kiss, Crook boy?

Crook: Sure, kiss me right here! (*Slapping, pointing to his left cheek).*

Norma Bently: places both arms around Crook;s neck, kissing him heavily on the left cheek. Laughing, cheerful.

Crook: That was good Norma. I might be all yours before the day is done here.

Norma: Well, you can have more. I'll save all of mine just for you.

The others at the table smile and snicker among themselves. Beau and Peanuts step slightly away to the side.

Gene Coffee: Where are you two going off to?

Beau: (*glancing toward Gene);* We have a few things to talk about between ourselves.

Peanuts: (*sad)*; I hear things about you, Beau.

Beau: Like what?

Peanuts: Upsetting things, things not nice for a girl to hear about her beau.

Beau: What have I done now, brown cow?

Peanuts: I heard all about Tonya Timorous.

Beau: Who ‘s that?

Peanuts: Beau, now don’t play me, boy. These gals talk around here. I know about you walking with her all around hereabouts, boy.

Beau:*(shrugs)* So what if I did?

Peanuts: (*Sobs into tears);* That’s it, boy, I’m gone! All you have to do is say so. Many a boy, I tell you, would love the likes of me.

Beau: Peanuts now, please no… I walked around some with that girl, but she’s too old for me.

Peanuts: But I heard more, Beau now.

Beau: Oh Peanuts, what on earth did you hear now?

Peanuts: I heard you were seen walking with her down to the kissing tree.

Beau: No, we didn’t. She asked me too, but I never did.

Peanuts: I know we haven't seen one another for two or three weeks now. I’ve been busy, and so have you, but still Beau…

Beau: You’re right, Peanuts. Why don't you and me go a-walkin’?

Peanuts: When?

Beau: Right now. We’ll only be out a few minutes.

Peanuts: (*hesitates*); Well..OK.

Norma has the others at the picnic table all cheering for Crook and the kisses she is giving him. Arm in Arm Beau and Peanuts saunter past the ball field, the small bleacher stand, the tires buried in the ground for an obstacle course down a ways. At the wood stand down from the obstacle course, they step into some small oaks for some distance. To the right among small pine trees stands a massive live oak tree. Limbs are

so huge they can't support their own weight, flopping onto the ground. The trunk is six feet thick, standing one hundred feet tall.

Beau: So there it is Peanuts.

Peanuts: What is it?

Beau: The famous kissing tree, of course!

Peanuts: Wow, it's a biggie for sure.

Beau: Yes, it is.

Peanuts: *(frowns suddenly);* Why did you take me here?

Beau: So I could be here with you, of course.

Peanuts: But we've been separated for so long. We're not going-together anymore, remember?

Beau: How long will it take to fix the damage I've done?

Peanuts: (*pauses, thinks*) Hmm, maybe all the way to Easter time.

Beau: How long is that?

Peanuts: A month, I think.

Beau: Remember the yellow ribbon?

Peanuts: Yes, it's a tough one to forget.

Beau: What exactly did it mean, now?

Peanuts: (*smiles);* I looked it up in the library the other day. Some man was a prisoner up in Fort Fisher after the war. He wrote a letter to his girlfriend. He'd been gone for a long time too. So he writes to her and tells her if she still wants him, to tie a yellow ribbon round the ole oak tree by her cabin. When he gets out in a week or two and rides his horse past her cabin, if he don't see that ribbon, then he'll keep on a-riding and consider it over with between them.

Beau: Now, that's a great idea, don't you think Peanuts?

Peanuts: (*Shocked, wide eyes)*; What's a great idea, crazy boy?

Beau: Why don't you tie a yaller ribbon 'round this old live oak tree here in three weeks or so, if'n you still want me to be yours. Late on good-Friday, when I come back here during last break or so , if'n I see that yaller ribbon, I'll walk 'round the ole oak tree looking for you on the other side there. (*Smiles, head thrown back);* We'll make our new reunion official then.

Peanuts: (*Smiles suddenly);* I know where some yellow ribbon is already. A big roll of it lays inside the bookcase in our classroom.

Beau: (smiling) The stars must have lined up for us, don't ya think so, Peanuts?

Peanuts: (*smile suddenly droops into a snarl)* But you'll have to earn your keeps with me, boy! You want a ribbon 'round that ole live oak tree yonder boy, then you had better give me a good reason to put it there.

Beau: Well, you know me good by now, happy gal. I always see my job through.

Lights dim, curtains fall, Beau and Peanuts exit

Act 2

Scene 1

Several days pass.
One Friday Morning…

Beau is standing by the highway at the end of a long dirt road up from where he lives with his grandparents and his Mum. The bus pauses. He enters. The bus pauses by the road to Tonya Timourous's house. She enters. She wears long faded jeans and a dark colored tee shirt. She sits down closely with Beau in the bus seat.

Tonya Timorous: So how is my little lover boy doing today?

Beau: Good, I guess. Mumzie tells me good is as one does.

Tonya Timorous: *(Whispers)*; I have something neat for you.

Beau: What? What kind of present do you have for me?

Tonya Timorous: (picks up a made over cardboard Burger King crown, covered with red and gold cloth covered in gem-like stickers. Tonya places this upon his head); Here little boy. Did you think you'd ever be crowned king of anything?

Beau: (*chuckles, glances around*) What on earth is that for?

Tonya Timorous: I'm crowning you King of Kissers now, boy. You can really get a good girl's blood to flowing. Do you know that?

Beau: What? Why on earth?

Tonya Timorous: You're trained by the best! I got you broke-right, now boy.

Beau chuckles

Tonya Timorous: There have been many other men, now, but none have the up on you, honey.

Beau: (*smiling*) I have no words. Kill me with silence.

The bus brakes, grinding, making a sharp left turn. The bus screeches to a halt. The doors open. A clatter of excitement is occurring outside. Beau and Tonya are last to exit.

Tonya Timorous: (*smiling*) Well, I suppose I'll see you later on.

Beau: I don't know. Mumzie says she may pick me up today.

Tonya Timorous: Maybe we can meet up at one of our breaks.

Beau: Maybe then. We can walk around, look at the wild flowers, maybe find a four leaf clover.

Tonya Timorous exits the bus, waving back a Beau, walking to the left. Beau exists and bus. He moves directly ahead toward the old school house. The students are gathering on, and in front of the porch. Beau is halfway there. The school house doors fling open. Mrs. McNeill steps out onto the porch, ringing the handbell. Chattering students walk up the steps and inside the school house, single file. Beau is the last one to walk up the steps.

Mrs. McNeill: How now, son? You're nearly late.

Beau: I didn't mean to be. I arrived when the bus did.

Mrs. McNeill: Whether you meant to be or not, is irrelevant. Bus or no bus, son, one must always be on time.

Beau: (*Smiles)*; I will be next time, Mrs. McNeill.

Mrs. McNeill: (*Smiles pleasantly*); I'm sure you will be.

Beau walks across the threshold, over to his seat. A white piece of construction paper with a big black spot in the center lays in his desk seat. Beau is holding this up before his face. He turns toward Twyla Clothcutter sitting calmly behind him.

Beau: What on earth is this thing about?

Twyla Clothcutter: *(chuckles)* You've been black-spotted boy. A target on-spot.

Beau: What does that mean?

Twyla Clothcutter: I know you've played pirates before.

Beau: Yes, every summer. We live a pirates life when me and my mates pole raft for weeks at a time down the deep run in Francis Marion swamp.

Twyla Clothcutter: Well?.., and you don't know what the black spot is?

Beau: I've never heard of such a thing.

Twyla Clothcutter: (*chuckles)* Remember last week how every day Mrs. Allen has been reading Treasure Island to us after lunch recess break?

Beau: Yeah, sure. It's a really good book, I think. Maybe my favorite.

Twyla Clothcutter: *(firm face*) Well, you should know all about that black spot then.

Beau: *(gasps*) I don't though, Twyla, come on!

Twyal Clothcutter: Well, you should pay attention more, then. Stop acting so crazy around here, flirting with these girls, and be productive for a change.

Beau: Yeah? My grades are OK. I made A's last nine weeks.

Twyla Clothcutter: Yeah maybe, but did you learn anything? An A on paper can mean a great big D shoved hard into the ear, and a flat out F in the head. Know what I mean there, jelly bean? (*sneers, shakes her head*) I honestly doubt you do.

Beau: Tell me though, Twyla. I know you know. Come on out with it.

Twyla Clothcutter: (*Smiles*); OK, being short about it then.., somebody has it out for you, Boy. I'm so glad its you and not me.

Beau: Who has it out for me?

Twyla Clothcutter: I don't know who, boy! Don't you dare be so rude as to ask me so.

Beau: Come on now! I know you know, Twyla. Tell me now.

Twyla Clothcutter: *(Smiling intimidatingly)*; Think a minute… It might be a YaHoo.

Beau: Make a bet with me. Which one? I kin take a hint.

Twyla Clothcutter: I don't know, crazy boy! I'll bet it's a great big, tall, ugly one, however.

Beau: Does he come to school often?

Twyla Cothcutter: Not much, but he always haunts the woods around here while we're in school.

Beau: You must be a-talkin' 'bout Klavin Clodhopper.

Twyla Clothcutter: I never said that. Don't mix my name into your whirlwind darlin.

Beau: (*Smiles);* Thankyou Twyla.

Twyla Clothcutter: Keep me out of it, boy! I never said a thing.

Beau: I'll fix him, if he wants trouble.

Twyla Clothcutter: Listen at yer-self here. You're not doodley, doggy boy. Who do you think you're foolin'?

Beau: Well, our gang is ready for trouble. Let it come along as it may.

Twyla Clothcutter: Like how, crazy boy? You're itchin' for a switchin'. I know that much.

Beau: reaching into his denim overalls pocket, pulling out a two and a half foot leather quirk made of three cords tightly braided.

Beau: We all have one of these things. If it will drive a horse or a stubborn mule, it 'ill surely drive away a snarling YaHoo or a saucy Flea-back.

Twyla Clothcutter: (*sneers)* Boy, don't you dare male me laugh so. You'll get braided.

Mrs. McNeill walks, standing before the chalkboard at the front of the classroom.

Mrs. McNeill: Class, now today is a beautiful day. The songbirds are singing, the wisteria hangs heavily in the air. The daffodils are beginning to break the

Ground, along with the gladiolus, the tulips. Look when we go outside! Have you been out to the yaupon bushes over by the swings, the seesaws, and the Merry Go Round? The daffodils are breaking the ground in the bed there. All around the upper-grades building the tulips are beginning to break ground, the gladiolas, the daisies. Over by the woods the wild-flowers are coming up. Have you noticed?

Gene Coffee: *(Raises his right hand)*; Yeah Miss. McNeill, over by the ditch along the woods, we found sundew patches growing!

Whayne Whiner: *(Raises his right hand);* Yeah Miss McNeill, my older brothers, James and Billy, found a patch O' fly-traps growing in the woods down on the other side of the ditch in the peat moss.

Leon the Flea-back: (*Raises his hand*); Yeah, Mrs. Allen and Mrs. McNeill, me and my brothers found a whole patch of Jack-in-The-Pulpits and Pink Honey Pitchers growing over by the creek down in the woods behind the school house where we live.

Mrs. McNeill: Well, that's all great. What other sights are you seeing this time of the year, class?

Cynthia the Flea-back: (*Raises her right hand)*; Yeah, Mrs. McNeill, we see beaver building their lodges over on the creek where we live. They must be making nests or somethin'.

Leon the Flea-back: (*smirks*) Where do you live at gal? You don't live anywhere near me.

Cynthia the Flea-back: I live in the pole-lodge over on Lesaine Hill, by Boo Branch, Po French.

Leon the Flea-back: Who you callin' Po French, booty breath? I know you don't live near me, Cynthia gal!

Cynthia the Flea-back: You shet-up to me, boy! I hope this big ole booty takes yo breath, pig!

Marvin the Flea-back: Yeah gerl, you think you somethin' jest because you live in a pole lodge, rather than a stick house like we do. Miss Lytle ova yonda,

gives you her cast away clothes to wear. I know that much. Cuz you so big you can fit into ‘em.

Cynthia the Flea-back: You shet-up to me too, Marvin! You don’t know anything. I don’t even know who Miss. Lytle is, with yo’ big fat self! You make Fatso look underweight.

Marvin the Flea-back: You sit there an’ tell a lie, gerl. You know who it is. It's that cripple human woman who works fo’ the church, who always comes out and gives everybody things. You know, and we know too! So don’t you dare tell us another lie, gerl!

Leon the Flea-back: Say your name for us, Cynthia, say it...

Cynthia the Flea-back: Boot-a-coot.

Leon the Flea-back: Boot-a-coot? Boy, have we hear’d it all now!

The whole class bursts out into laughter.

Cynthia the Flea-back: Whut-chu laughing at? Who do all of you think you are?

Marvin the Flea-back: I swear it sounds just like boot-a-coot when you say yer name!

Mrs. McNeill: Now, now class. We all need to get busy. Idle hands are the devil’s workshop. I see the cold, hard truth in those words, in children and adults every day. So let us walk over to the bookcase there in the center of the room and grab us a plain sheet. Pencils are there by the side of the paper stack. We got the new fresh supplies recently. We must make good use of ‘em now.

The class arises, and walks toward the bookcase. One by one students pick up a plain clean sheet of paper and a pencil. Each student walks back toward their seats. The last student takes her seat. Mrs. Allen speaks.

Mrs. Allen: Now class, think of spring. Think of something that makes you really happy. Now what we want you to do is draw us a nice picture of it so you can show and tell the others about what you saw or felt over these past few days.

Mrs. McNeill places plastic containers filled with colorful crayons on the long teacher's desk to the left of the chalkboard.

A few minutes pass..

Students are dedicated to their drawing

Mrs. Allen: So let us see.. What have we done now? Who will be the first to stand up beside their desk and tell us?

Tiny Teresa Tin Pecker: My daddy has planted us a big flower garden. He lets me help him put out seeds and till the ground.

Mrs. Allen: So what is your picture of?

Tiny Teresa Tin Pecker: It's daddy's flower garden!

Mrs. Allen: Color it and the picture will look great!.. Who's next?

Fame Priest: (*holding his picture up);* My picture is of a deer my daddy shot. It was a big twelve point buck! It lays on the tailgate of my daddy's pickup truck. It fed the whole family for mite-near a month. We are still eating soup from the bones now.

Mrs. Allen: Anybody else ready to tell us what your picture is about?

Beau: I'll tell you mine.

Mrs. McNeil: That will be nice. Give it a shot.

Beau: Well, mine is of a big oak tree out somewhere, with a great big yellow ribbon tied around it.

Beau glancing around the room, then quickly toward Peanuts

Beau: I think when people join hands after being gone a while, it really makes everybody happy all over again.

Mrs. Allen: (*shaking the handbell by the door) Ring, ring, ring! Ring, ring, ring! Ring,*

ring, ring!

Mrs. McNeill: It's break time. Everybody line-up now.

Students race to line up single-file at the door. Mrs. McNeill opens the door. The students exit out in a single file. Each student steps down the steps, racing out into the school yard. Others are hanging around on the porch. Beau meets Peanuts. They walk along the woods edge by the ball field.

Peanuts: I have problems with you, Beau.

Beau: Like what?

Peanuts: All of this trouble you keep getting into. I wonder if'n you ain't crazy myself.

Beau: It's been a while now. I'm doing better.

Peanuts: You lie, it's something every day, Beau. I hear about the stir betwixt yer gang and them YaHoos.

Beau: It's a small one only.

Peanuts: If it ain't them, boy, it's them Flea-backs..

Beau: Maybe, from time to time. Most days, however, are peaceful and calm, Peanuts.

Peanuts: No Beau, I heard all about that deal between you and that really ugly greenish gray Flea-back, with the dog's snout face. I think his scaly skin and his breath smells horribly bad. Then he drags that awful tail around everywhere he goes.

Beau: Well.., *(he shrugs),* all of 'em are like that.

Peanuts: Not as much so as that one.

Beau: Oh yeah?

Peanuts: But still Beau, you didn't have to do what you did.

Beau: I had no other choice. He was sitting on top of me.

Peanuts: Ooh, gross boy! Your tales disgust me.

Beau: Yeah, and how!

Peanuts: Still, you got in trouble.

Beau: Yeah?, but it passed.

Peanuts: Tell me truly, Beau. Promise me you wont git into trouble any more.

Beau: No, I'll try not to, now.

Peanuts: Promise me!

Beau: OK..

Peanuts: Say you promise me that you won't.

Beau: OK.

Peanuts: Say it, or our union is off for good.

Beau: Really? For good is a long time, Peanuts.

Peanuts: Yeah Beau. My parents think you are the most terrible boy around. They warn me all the time not to have anything else to do with you.

Beau: You don't take up for me?

Peanuts: Of course I do! Promise me….

Beau: OK, I promise you.

Peanuts: (*With a hard look on her face);* Promise me what?

Beau: (*smiles, then frowns*) Promise you I won't get into any more trouble.

Peanuts: (*great big smile*) Great Beau! You just don't know how happy hearing you say that makes me.

Lights dim

Peanuts & Beau exit the stage

Scene 2

The students are all seated and settling down. Mrs. McNeill and Mrs. Allen stand at the front of the classroom with the chalkboard behind them.

Mrs. McNeill: It's such a pretty day and I honestly feel we should begin by giving the Good Lord, thanks for our place in life, and the freedoms we have. One day in the future all of this you see in here and around on the outside, may be gone, and you'll all wish dearly that you could come back and relive today's experience.

The students bow their heads, after a few minutes, they lift their heads up.

Mrs. Allen: I know the Supreme Court outlawed us from praying like that, but I don't really care because the constitution gives us the right, and it's the law of this land, not the Supreme Court. So, we don't know what nation's laws The Supreme Court is trying to impose, cause it sure isn't ours.

Mrs. McNeill: Look class, we really are in a good mood today. Let's begin with some listening comprehension. I'm going to put on a record and let all of you listen. Go get a sheet of lined paper and tell me what this story is about. Can you do that?

The whole class: Yes Mrs. McNeill!

The class arises one by one. Each student picks up a piece of lined paper from the bookshelf. Each student walks back to their desks. The class settles down. Mrs. Allen puts a large record on the record player. She snaps the switch on. The students are totally silent. A narrator tells the story of Peter Rabbit. The record finishes playing. The students begin writing as hard as they can. A few students are finished writing after several minutes..

Mrs. McNeill: (*Shakes the handbell*); Ring, ring! Jing a ling a ling!

All of the students run to line up single file by the door of the classroom. Mrs. McNeill opens the left hand door. The students walk out the door, across the porch, down the steps, and into the yard. Crook, CL, Fish, and Beau head toward the ball field.

Mrs. Allen: Don't forget to listen for the bell letting you know the first break is over!

In the distance not far from the woods directly across, three YaHoos and three Flea-backs are gathered up around an old wooden hog's head barrel. They glare in the direction of the four humans.

Leon the Flea-back: Look at 'em, boys. They all think they're such hot stuff around here.

Airic Linberger: *(gruff voice*) Yeah, especially the one they call Beau. Look at him yonder. I can't stand the way he walks, even lookin' at him from here.

Zebby the chief Flea-back: I don't care much for him or the one they call Fish. Look how goofy Fish looks, with his soda bottle-bottom glasses and his side-walled haircut.

Klavin Clodhopper: He looks and acts like Herman Munster to me. You seen that show? And Beau there, leave him to me. That son of a dog is all mine, boys. I feel like doin' some slappin' and stompin' today.

The four students standing by the woods edge

CL: Look at the YaHoo and the Flea-backs yonder.

Crook: What a sight for sore eyes!

Fish: Ain't that ole Klavin I see?

CL: I'm a-feared it is, boys. I swear i felt the rumble and heard the thunder when he took a step.

Fish: How many grades did he fail?

Crook: Three, I think. I hear he weighs in at 220 pounds. All of 'em have failed at least one grade. I don't even see why the headmaster allows 'em to come here. Why do we have to be around any of 'em? Somehow all of it ain't fair. Mumzie, Pap, grandma nor grandpa had to, so why do we? Why can't we choose not to be around 'em? Where is the freedom?

Fish: The Bermeister says they must be allowed here.

Crook: Like my Pap says, the Burmeister can go toot-a-flute, far as I'm concerned.

Beau: (*gazing off into the distance*) Let's walk over there.

Fish: (*gasps*) Are you crazy? Over where?

Beau: By the hogs head yonda-ways.

Fish: You are crazy. What's with you, Beau?

Beau: They keep lookin' this way. I wonder what they want.

Fish: Klaven is a monster. He'll kill the likes of you, skinny boy.

Beau: Yeah maybe. You in with me?

Fish: I'll watch this one.

Beau: (*Glancing around)*; Anybody in with me?

Beau: (*glancing around, both arms open, shrugs*) Fine then. I wonder what it is they want.

Beau smiles as he commences walking across the ball field toward the hogs head.

Lights dim, scene changes: *Over by the hog's head.*

Marvin the Flea-back: Look-out now, Klaven', he heard you call his name.

Klaven Clodhopper: He'll make fine toilet fodder. I'll chaw him up and spit him back out.

Leon the Flea-back: Look out now, he's a wild one, doo-lottie!.

Kalven Clodhopper: (*smiling, shaking his head*) I'm lickin' my chops, boys.

Beau takes his time walking. He makes it out to the hogshead. His friends and everybody else stands watching in the distance.

Beau: *(smiling a big smile*) Well, a big hello to all of you. I don't get to speak much to any of you.

Leon the Flea-back: Did we ever ask for anything?

Beau: No, but the way all of you kept looking over our way, I thought you might need help of some kind, and there was something I could help you with.

Criss the hippie: To tell the truth, if we ever did need help, we could find better than the likes of you to ask.

Beau: (chuckles, shrugs) Now that wasn't nice for you to say to one who came to help. What am I to think?

Klaven Clodhopper: (steps away, stands before Beau. Both arms are crossed) I don't care what you think. You need to roll out punk.

Beau: What if I don't want to? What if I like-it where I'm at?

Klaven Clodhopper: (*grinning)*; Now watch the fly buzzing. See him buzz high and to your left?

Bzzzzzz
cause if he don't get you—-.

Klaven Clodhopper: (backhands Beau across the face suddenly) Then the left hand will.

Beau left back fists Klaven hard underneath his nose and across his left jaw with his right fist. Klaven swings a hard right haymaker punch. Beau ducks. Klaven swings a left haymaker punch. Beau ducks that one. Beau pops back up, he punches Klaven hard right across the jaw again, swinging his head to the left side. When Klaven turns back around, he is enraged. Beau pulls out his quirk. He strikes Klaven hard across his chest.

Zebby the Flea-back: Get him Klaven. Don't let the likes of this human crud get the up On you!

Crook: (*from the other side of the ball field)*; Give him what for! He deserves it!

Zebby the Flea-back: { tosses Klaven a quirk to use); Make him work for it, Kalven!

Klaven strikes Beau across the chest. Beau strikes Klaven across the chest again. His quirk cuts the wind as it strikes. He strikes again from the opposite direction. Klaven begins running backwards to escape Beau and his quirk. The Flea-back and the YaHoo cheer Klaven on. All of the students gather by the woods edge in the distance to watch. They cheer Beau on. Peanuts runs away to hide.

Beau drives Klaven backwards from the hogshead all the way to the asphalt top beside the upper grades building. Students of all ages play basketball and hopscotch on the blacktop. Klaven falls down trying to get away. Beau whips him across the face five times, slashing the wind in audible strokes as he cuts. Deep slash marks appear across Klaven's face on both sides. Klaven rolls to get away from Beau's fury. He leaps to his feet, running away from him across the asphalt top.

Klaven Clodhopper: You wait, human scum, I'll get you yet! I'll kill you!

Leon the Flea-back Yeah, we know where your weak spot is!

Mary Cromartie: Tremble in your brogans, Beau! You're rough and tough, but not that much!

Criss the hippie: When you are toast and our human slave, all of us then will have it made. For then upon your head it shall be written, his poor heart was heavily smitten. You may then no longer brag nor so proudly boast, Since the day your heart was cooked by the old lamp post!

Klaven Clodhopper: (pulls a jack-knife, drawing it back, rushes toward Beau) You wait! I'll cut your throat, pig!

Lights dim, Beau and Klaven exit the state

Scene 3

Mrs. McNeill: *(shaking the hand bell)*; *Ring a ling! Ring a ling! Ring a ling!*

The Flea-back and the Yahoo walk away toward the woods. Beau Weible turns around and walks back toward the school house. Walking up ahead of him he sees Peanuts walking toward the steps with several other students.

Beau: Peanuts! I was looking for you. Where were you?

Peanuts: (pretending she doesn't hear him); keeps on walking forward.

Beau: Peanuts! I know you hear me.

Peanuts: *(Pauses, turns around, nearing tears*) You promised me, Beau!

Beau: Yeah, but I didn't mean to. That fat YaHoo lashed me first.

Peanuts: But you promised me.. You're not even any good for your word.

Beau: I want to talk it over.

Peanuts: No, I have nothing more to say!

Beau: Peanuts! Look how far we've gone.

Peanuts: No! Leave me alone. (*Sobbing)* I don't want to have nothing more to do with you!

Peanuts runs up the stairs and into the school house. Beau chases after her.

Beau: Peanuts! Why are you turning me away like this?

Peanuts walks across the door threshold into the classroom. She takes her seat in the third row, third seat from the rear. Beau hops into the seat beside her.

Beau: Peanuts! Let's talk. We can begin all over again.

Peanuts: No! Go away from me, boy. We have nothing more to talk about.

Gene Coffee walks up.

Gene Coffee: You're in my seat now. Get up!

Beau: Peanuts please. Please don't turn me away!

Peanuts: (Crying*)*; Go away from me, boy!

Beau arises, walks away from her. Mr. McNeill walks up from nowhere, grabbing him hard by the bicep of his right arm. Beau snaps around, looking him directly in the face, astonished.

Mr. McNeil: Son, you step outside with me, now, this minute.

Beau walks out the door of the school. He pauses on the porch with Mr. McNeill. Mr. McNeill grabs him hard again hard on the right arm in the bicep. ;

Mr. McNeill: (*moving directly down into Beau's face)*; I've just never seen the likes of a student like you. It's something, every day! At the rate you are going , you'll be in prison before you're twenty one. What on earth are we going to do with you, son? I'm calling your Mumzie today, and we're going to seriously discuss removing you from the academy. I know all about that big fight. We've all but banished Klaven. He has been kicked out so many times, but he hasn't been raised up right and doesn't know any better. You do though, son. I know your Mumsie and your grandparents well. I'm thinking it will be a step by step process. I'm going to discuss three days home for you, with them. You see, Klaven and that whole crowd he's in cahoots with, doesn't have the grades to be here, really. You do, son! I'm afraid being at home will harm you. I'm calling her right now.We'll work something out. I might give you one more chance, but I'm still calling her today.

Beau holds his head down. He sulks back into class, when Mr. McNeill releases his arm. Slowly he plods over toward his seat in the second row, third seat from the front. He sits down. He glances over toward Peanuts. Peanuts quickly turns her head, shoving her nose high up into the air. Beau turns toward his left. A small, but somewhat pretty new girl with golden pig tails, a pallid complexion, and ice blue eyes sits in the seat beside him.

Beau: *(glancing toward the new gir*l) Hello, how are you?

New girl: (*smiles)*; I'm fine, what about you?

Beau: I'm doing well, I suppose, all things considering.

New girl: Like what?

Beau: I'll tell you later.

New girl: Why not now, boy?

Beau: (*chuckles*) What's your name?

New girl: Puddin' Tane.

Beau: *(smiles);* Awe, come on!

New girl: It's true.

Beau: What's true?

New girl: My name's Puddin' Tane.

Beau: Don't believe it.

New girl: 'Tis. What's your'n?

Beau: Beau.

New girl: That's a funny name.

Beau: Well, I told you mine, so you can tell me yours.

New girl: I did, boy.

Beau: Don't believe it.

New girl: Sandy then.

Beau: Sandy what?

New girl: Sandy Slinky, with the stinky pinky.

Beau: My word! I'll call you Sandy then. How's that?

New girl: That will work. Sandy is well and good.

Beau: Where are you from?

Sandy: The palace in the sun.

Beau: Come on!

Sandy: The hill by governor Owen's old manor home.

Beau: Yeah, near Columns Plantation Home?

Sandy: That's me.

Beau: Wow! Little rich girl, huh?

Sandy: For me to know and you to find out.

Mrs. McNeill walks in front of the chalkboard at the head of the class. She stoops down. She puts on a record. She stands back up.

Mrs. Allen: Today in class we are going to learn about the pioneers. We all think we have it so tough from time to time, but these people truly had life difficult. Can you imagine traveling across this whole country in a wagon? Well that is what these people did. They traveled across the whole country, leaving everything they knew, into a strange land. Well, we know about these people

and what they experienced because of people like Laura Engals Wilder who kept notes and wrote books about their lives. That is what this record we are going to listen to today is about, Laura Engals Wilder, and her book, Little House on The Prairie. While you listen to the story, I just want you to imagine you are there with her, experiencing this. You know, in reality, it hasn't been that long ago. Eighty to ninety years isn't really all that long ago. Go pick up a piece of paper from the bookcase after listening, and write down what you think about this.

The students arise from their seats. They make their way to the bookcase. Each student grabs a piece of paper. One by one they make their way back to their desks. Once the class settles, Mrs. McNeill places the needle on the record. She turns on the knob for the record player to click on. The students listen attentively. When the record stops playing, the students begin writing. Every student has his or her dedicated attention to the paper before them.

Gene Coffee: I've finished, teacher. (*Handing his paper over in Mrs. Allen's direction).*

Norma Bently: I've finished mine teacher!

Jimmy Tin Pecker: All you have are scribbles on your paper, girl!

Norma Bently: No I don't boy, I've done mine already!

Mrs. Allen: (*walking around collecting papers*) That's good! That's good! I see fine papers here.

Denine Demoiselle: I have mine done already!

Mrs. McNeill: (*ringing the hand bell*); *Jing a ling! Jing a ling! Jing a ling!*

Mrs. Allen: OK class, it's time for the first break now. Line up as usual by the door. We will continue with these papers and our discussion when we make it back into class. We also have some math we need to work on today, so let's go, Now!

The class runs toward the door, lining up in single file. Mrs. McNeil opens the left door when the last student steps into line. The students walk out one behind the

other, across the porch, down the steps, and into the school yard. Once out on the porch, Beau is careful to walk up behind Sandy Slinky, following her down the steps.

Beau: Hello Sandy, how are you?

Sandy Slinky: Fine. I wanted to watch cartoons at home today. Do you like cartoons?

Beau: Yes.

Sandy Slinky: What's your favorite?

Beau: Bugs Bunny.

Sandy Slinky: I like him too.

Beau: I like Woody Woodpecker.

Sandy Slinky: Yeah, me too. (*Laughs).*

A girl walks up suddenly behind Sandy

Sandy Slinky: (*turns around*) How are you doing today Kim?

Kim: I'm fine

Sandy Slinky: What did you get for that paper we are doing?

Kim: A few things here and there.

Sandy Slinky:*(gasps)* Like what?

Beau: Hey, why don't we walk out a ways toward the woods edge here?

Sandy looks over at him and laughs

Kim: (*Laughs*); Well, Laura Engals loved to move around.

Sandy Slinky: Her daddy played a fiddle.

Kim: I wonder if Laura liked to dance?

Beau: Hey, look at the new grass coming up over there! Let's have a look-see.

Both Sandy and Kim turn toward him and laugh

Kim: What did you get on those math problems the other day?

Sandy Slinky: I made a hundred. What about you?

Kim: I got ninety, I think.

Sandy Slinky: Gene got a hundred. (*gazes off, sighs*) He seems so intelligent.

Kim: I started reading more. I read Treasure Island all by myself.

Sandy Slinky: That's a hard one.

Beau: The air sure is heavy with a sweet smell this morning.

Sandy and Kim laugh

Sandy & Kim: That's wisteria.

Beau: I smell a rose in there, I believe.

Sandy Slinky: Hey Kim, you told me something about Gene the other day.

Kim: Yeah, he told me he saw a ghost the other night.

Sandy Slinky: Wow, a real ghost!

Kim: I sure believe in ghosts.

Sandy Slinky: Yeah, me too!

Beau: Hey, let me show you girls something.

Beau reaches into his pocket, pulling out three nice arrowheads and a rabbit's foot. Kim and Sandy glance over at him and laugh. The three head toward the small set of bleachers by the small ball field. When they make it there, they pause.

Kim: What did Mrs. Allen say we had to do when break is over?

Sandy Slinky: We're going to talk about them papers when we get back in, I think.

Beau: Hey, you know, grandpa says rabbit feet are for good luck, see?

Beau picks the dried and pressed rabbit's foot up, handing it over toward the girls.

Kim: *(draws back*) Ooo! Who got the rabbit?

Beau: Why, I did?

Sandy Slinky: How boy? You don't know how to use a gun.

Beau: No, I caught him on a wire.

Kim: A wire? What is that?

Beau: Well, grandpa showed me how to take the copper wire out of old electrical wire, then twist the wires to make a cable. He showed me how to set this out to catch things in.

Kim: Like what kind of things, boy?

Beau: Like rabbits, squirrels, birds, especially pigeons.

Kim: What do you do with them?

Beau: Make pies out of 'em.

Sandy and Kim: Oh please, boy!

Sandy and Kim explode into laughter

Beau: No, it's all true!

Sandy Slinky: Boy, you better go back and tell Peanuts that big one.

Beau: Yeah; I wish I could.

Kim: Now what's the matter? You heartbroken?

Beau: *Sighs deeply.*

Sandy & Kim: (exploding into laughter) Shame, shame, shame, on you two!

Mrs. McNeill:(*ringing the hand bell*) *Ring-a-ling! Ring-a-ling! Ring-a-ling!*

It's time for class now! Let's go! Let's go!

The students run toward the porch, then make a single file line. Mrs. McNeill opens the door. The students walk inside, each to his own specific seat. Beau and Sandy Slinky sit in their seats. Beau turns toward Sandy.

Beau: Hey Sandy, look at that funny hat Norma is wearing.

Sandy Slinky: Sticks her tongue out at Beau. Laughs.

Some time passes…

Beau: *(turns back around*) Sandy, what were we supposed to be doin' now?

Sandy Slinky: (*Sticks her tongue out at Beau. Laughs);* Be quiet to me, boy. Ever-body knows how full of loblolly you are around here.

Scene 4

Sunday morning

Beau, CL, and Fish are at the steps in front of a small three hundred year old wood framed church on a slight land roll, tucked away on the edge of an oak stand. All around the church are white wooden poles three feet high, sticking in the ground for people to hitch their horses on. When one stands at the road, looking toward the large brown oak double doors of the church, to the right is a graveyard with its stone slabs sticking up among scattered oak trees.

At the edge of the graveyard by the hard surfaced road is a tall, three foot diameter hickory tree. The ground is covered with hickory nuts around the tree. Cars are pulling in and parking by the hitching posts. A horse and buggy is tied to a large three feet diameter red oak between the church on the right side, and the graveyard. People are walking up the steps and through the double doors. The men don suits, ties, and white or gray fedora hats. The women are donning 1920's style ankle length dresses and sunbonnets with black, blue, or green ribbons tied around them. Beau's mother opens the door of the big blue Marquis Mercury, parked underneath the hickory tree facing the church doors. The bell knells energetically from the steeple. Fish and CL are standing in front of the steps.

CL: What did any of you do yesterday?

Beau: *(walking up*) Set four rabbit boxes.

Fish: Cut wood all day with Pap.

Beau: I broke ground with grandPap, and scattered fertilizer.

Fish: What kind?

Beau: Some we made from wood ash and oyster shells we dug from the high bank over on Baker Man's Creek.

CL: Boy, did ya find any shark's teeth?

Beau: Shore did, lots. I dug five peck buckets full.

CL: I hear many are found there big as my hand!

Fish: Wow! Yeah, we do find teeth that big down there, and even bigger.

Beau: Yeah, I remember that time we found more than thirty teeth big like that. We laid out two rows of fifteen, and shaped it like a mouth would be. Fifteen would be about how many one jaw would have. Pop, that mouth was more 'n six feet wide!

Fish: I remember that.

CL: Wow! That was a big, dumb shark!

Fish: Yeah it was. We traced out until in the dirt we had an outline of a body what-seemed to line up with the mouth. We paced out this trace line and figured that-shark must have been maybe thirty feet long.

CL: Wow! That's a monster set of joules, dook-chute!

Fish: We better go on inside. Everybody else is.

Beau: Well, two more cars are pulling up.

CL: Who is it?

Beau: Looks like Denine, Lonnie, and Alex.

Alex, Lonnie, and Denine run out of the cars when their doors open. They head toward the steps.

Fish: Fancy seeing you three here.

Alex: 'Tis been awhile. It's not bad here, I guess. (laughs) At least we get to go places ever-now and again in that big green-bean machine there. (*Points toward the church bus)* Maybe we can all ride out in it 'N watch the big Booty Bug mud sling one day, ova yonda by Cooter Creek. What ya think? (*laughs)*

Denine Demoneillie: (*Laughs)* They have that ever-spring, I think. I want to go inside, you know, but somehow I don't want to go at the same time..

CL: It's like that sometimes.

Denine: There's our parents-a-walking up them steps.

Alex: And here we are.

Beau: (*Places his right index finger across his lips)*; Shhh, don't say another word.

Denine: *(chuckles)*; Oh, lord, here we go.

Beau: (*Glances back up the steps); The doors are closing*; Follow me!

Beau ducks down beneath the windows in the church. The glass has a haze on it from the candles in the holders being lit every Sunday and sometimes on other days, for so many years. Each child does the same. The children move toward the rear of the church. At the back side, they all pause in safety.

Denine: (*Laughing);* We're all a-gwine to all get whooped if they find out.

Beau: Well, they ain't, I tell you.

Fish: What on earth are we gonna do back here? Miss Elizabeth 'll know we didn't go to the Sunday School down stairs. She'll dime us all out for shore.

Alex: Lets go look for ghosts down in the basement!

Lonnie: Yeah, they're down there, boys. I hear'd Mr. Carlton Willis's stories. He says there's ghosts from way back down in there.

CL: Oh yeah, like what ghosts?

Lonnie: Like the old war soldier that fought in the Battle of Bethel Township during the Revolution.

CL: Oh, James Cashwell, I remember.

Lonnie: Yeah, him.

Beau: That door underneath the church is always open. Me and some friends hid out in there for a week one summer.

Alex: What friends?

Beau: From over on Turkey Ridge, where I live.

Alex: Who?

Beau: Well, Banjo, Riff Raff, and Huckle-Buck. Shank Shaft, Ponky, and Hump Joe I think, might have been with us.

Denine: I know Banjo and Huckle-Buck. They're crazy. I can tell you that much.

Beau: Anything but civilized. I prefer uncivilized company myself. They are far more fun!

The children walk down a set of concrete steps. They stop at a ragged white thick heavy wooden door. Beau is first, stopping, turning the knob, pushing the door open, walking inside. The others follow. The inside is dark. There is a speck of light in scattered places.

Denine: Does anybody see anything?

Alex: Not a thing.

Lonnie: Not hardly. It seems strangely quiet, don't you think?

CL: Nothing to talk about.

Beau: Can't say I do either. The quietness makes me wonder.

The group moves father back inside, far from the door.

Beau: Hush now… I think I hear some-um.

Fish: What boy? I don't hear a-thang.

CL: Neither do I. What you hear must be one O' your loose screws rattlin'.

Beau: Wait a minute… I think I see somethin'!

Alex: All of you are crazy. I don't see anything in this place!

Fish: Wait a minute. It's somethin' on the ground!

Beau: Yeah, and it's moving!

Lonnie: Let's get out of here! I'm moving on, Papa! (*scrambles back toward the door)*

Fish: It's like a big cloth bag of some sort.

Beau: Yeah, that's what I'm talking about!

Fish: That bag is standing up! Look out now. Let's get away from here! (*scrambles back*

toward the door.)

The kids are heading back out toward the door.

Beau: (*remains*) And grandPap carried us down here to show us there ain't no ghosts in here once.

Fish: (*pauses, glancing back)* Are you crazy? Let's go, boy! Come on.

Beau: No wait..! It's a girl in a old night bag, not a ghost. (*He turns around*) Hey! How are you a-doin' gal?

Girl: I'm fine now. I don't know who you are or what you want.

Beau: (*gasps)* Wait a minute... I know you.

Girl: Well you should, boy. (*climbing out of the bag*) I saw you at homecoming a little while ago.

Beau: Yeah, your Jeanie, Miss. McDowell's niece!

Jeanie: That's me, boy. The one and only, in the flesh, and right square in your face!

Beau:*(turns back around)* Wait a minute! Come back in here. It's all OK.

Beau: *(glances in Jeanie's direction*) They all ran, They thought you was a ghost.

Jeanie: Well imagine that. Little ole me, a bloody ghost!

Beau: I always did think you were a handsome ghost, to be honest with you.

Jeanie: Yeah, I've heard all about you. Bad boys like you would say things like that to nice little girls like Me. *(smiles)*

Beau: They're all a-feared, (*smiles)* but I sure ain't.

Jeanie: smiles broadly.

Beau: What in the Sam Hill are you-a-doin' down here in a place like this?

Jeanie: I up and got tired of being civilized, Beau, so I ran away. Civilized life just ain't My slice of cake, honey.. I'm an adventurer, like Jane is to Tarzan. You ever watch that on TV boy?

Beau: Some… I love the black and white shows. You? A little Girl? Got tired of bein' civilized?

Jeanie: Why yeah, two stones and a thick stick! Auntie's farm ain't but three miles or so through the woods. I walked past her horse stables until I came to the field behind it. I walked round the field to the woods. I followed the fire cut until it came out at Midway Grill down yonder. I crossed the highway, then follered the dirt road a- goin' toward the hill where ole Owen's mansion house sits. That runs into the crazy Baker man's Creek. I followed that 'till it took me out by the school house. I can follow the old railroad bed till it carries me into Bethel Township hiah. So, hiah I Am honey, all trimmed, rare, and in the real flesh!

Beau: Wow! Your a real star for bein' uncivilized! What did you eat and drink?

Jeanie: Nab-corn and catfish I catch on lines over in the pond by the hangin' tree across the field yonder, in the woods behind the boy-scout hut.. If'n I stuff a reed full of grass, ditch water makes some fine drinkin'. When that log hut has its door open honey, I make good use of it. I can sleep on that big deer hide they have a hangin' up on the wall. There's a bear hide a-hangin up I use for a blanket.

Beau: Well, how do ya cook it?

Jeanie: On the oil heater down here, in a pot I found in the old cabin in the woods from the graveyard thar. I eat nab-corn raw. I also live in that run down house in the woods beside the graveyard over yonda. Them doors is always open!

Beau: Yeah? That old cabin with the trees growing up through it over there?

Jeanie: I live over there sometimes, when I'm in my fullest blood, and a-rootin' and a-tootin', son!

Beau: How long you been gone?

Jeanie: 'Bot a month, 'bot a week longer maybe.

Beau: Your Mumsie 'll be worried sick.

Jeanie: (*shrugs*) She'll get over it.

Beau: What 'll she do when she finds out about this?

Jeanie: She'll skin my ice, of course! She threatens me with candy striped legs all the time.

Beau reaches into his suit pocket. He pulls out a twist of leaves

Jeanie: What 's that? Looks a mite interestin'

Beau: GrandPap's chaw.

Jeanie: Looks homemade.

Beau: It's twista-chaw.

Jeanie: Yeah boy, that's the best kind!

Beau: You chaw, gal?

Jeanie: Darn tootin'! I kin toot-a-flute 'til a fine ole golden owl hoots, after a good chaw 'n spit a bit, honey! Don't ya eva fergit what I'm a-tellin' ya now. I dumb shore won't tell any O' the others what I just tole you honey.

Beau: I swear you're my kind-a gal, for shore..

Jeanie: *(smiling, shaking her head)* I'll run with ya, honey, but I ain't tyin' myself down to no man! Not-a-sayin' you ain't a good one, but it's just the way the creek flows around me these days.

Beau: (*chuckles*) Well, let's go outside where the light is, with the others.

Jeanie: Sure, why not?

Jeanie and Beau walk out the door, up the stairs, and into the light. Alex, CL, Lonnie, Denine and Fish gasp. They gaze around at one another with their mouths gaping open. Denine stands at a distance behind them, laughing. Jeanie is wearing faded worn and very dirty bibbed blue jean overalls, and a cast-away tee green shirt with Lynard

Skynard written in large letters across the front. She smiles. She skillfully chews the tobacco. She spits with a perfected aim between CL's shiny Sunday leather shoes. He jumps backwards. She explodes into laughter.

Scene 5

The kids are gathered out behind the church, in front of the basement door. Jeanie knocks the dust from her tattered, faded denim overalls. Her coal black hair seems to fall into place by itself neatly upon the tops of her shoulders. Her clear pale face and dark eyes appear to capture the sunlight.

Alex: You almost look like a new person. Where did you git that shirt?

Jeanie: I almost feel like a new person. I live on nabs N handouts, poo-boy. How many times must I say so?

CL: What's the difference? I guess all O' these clothes-lines are filled with clothes for the pickin', eh?

Jeanie: Well I found some nab-corn. See my cobs in the edge of the field yonder?

Beau: The church gives food. You knock on the door, girl.

Jeanie: *(places both hands on her hips);* Then they tell auntie… Come on boy! Your brains be where? Or should I tremble in my dare to ask?

Beau: Give me another spin.

Jeanie: That woman over at Melvin Brothers .. What's her name? Doris, I think? She'll part with cheese sandwiches and Knee-High chocolate drink, if'n ya ask her Kindly, 'N plead yer case right. I worked a few days in thar fer her in exchange for food N a night-bed upstairs. The old foldin' cots N the wool Civil War blankets ain't half bad fer a bed.

CL: Yeah, I get all kinds of stuff in that old store. Good shop made pocket knives, fish hooks, and even some molasses soaked twista-chew one time.

Jeanie: You know how the store leans to one side. There's a great big beehive there I thought about raiding. Haints are upstairs where I was too. I saw one on a dark N stormy night once.

Fish: (*smiles*) Mrs. Doris would love you to get shed of that hive for her. .

Beau: She might add a slice of fresh cured ham onto the cheese for doin' that.

Denine: What are we gonna do? Church 'll be over-with soon.

Jeanie: Lets walk over into the graveyard, and up toward the hickory tree. We'll be out enough nobody in there can see us.

Denine: What's your whole name?

Jeanie: My whole name? *(smiles,pauses*) Why Sunshine, of course.

Denine: You dog! (*chuckles*) But that's a pretty name. Jeanie Sunshine.

Jeanie: (*firm face, no smiles*) Yeah, you know Miss McDowell from here and at the school library, don't you?

Denine: Yeah.

Jeanie: My Mumsie is her sister.

Denine: That's cool.

The kids walk toward the backside of the graveyard. They walk past the horse and buggy tied up on the old oak tree. They make it halfway out across the backside of the graveyard, turn right, walking among the standing tomb slabs.

Lonnie: Wow! These are some old stones here.

Alex: This one has CSA at the top. Says 1875. Lets see now… that's almost a hundred Years.

Denine: Here's one, look at this. It says Papa was a man who really loved women. But Mama caught him with one a-swimmin' . Here lies Papa. (*Laughs).*

Jeanie: How old is it?

Denine: 1820.

CL: Here is one that says here lies one so damp and cold, but he always did what he was told, so now the good Lord has his sweet soul.

The kids pass through the graveyard. They pause underneath the huge hickory tree by the highway. Fresh nuts are covering the ground and hanging from the limbs. Denine stoops down, grabbing two or three.

Denine: (*tosses a nut, strikes Lonnie in the chest*) Here goon, let's play war!

Lonnie: (*tosses one a Denine)* Yeah, sounds like fun!

Denine ducks, moves around the group.

Alex: Look out now! (*Tosses a nut, striking Lonnie in the head).*

Beau: *(reaches down, picking a nut up, tossing it and striking CL in the ribs)*; Look out boy! (*Glances around)* I'm getting him before he gets me!

The entire group mills around. They race all over underneath the hickory tree and around in the church yard, throwing the wood like hickory nuts. Some of the nuts strike the door of the church. They all laugh. They talk loudly.

Jeanie Sunshine: I'm hitting all of you! I'm not taking chances with nobody!

The church door opens. Out walks the elder patrons. They pause in the churchyard by the steps, glancing around with puzzled expressions on their face.

Elderly lady: (*gazes out toward the hickory tree*) What on earth is this? (*Turns toward the open church door*) Hey Vivian, isn't that Jeanie over there by the hickory tree?

Miss. McDowell: My word! *(gasps)*; There she is! Let me run and get that girl, acting and looking so crazy out there.

Miss. McDowell runs out toward the hickory nut tree. The kids are tossing hickory nuts at one another and running all around.

Miss. McDowell: Jeanie girl, you come to me right now! My word, we were so worried. Where on earth have you been? None of us knew what on earth had happened. You know we called the police, don't you?

Jeanie Sunshine: I'm uncivilized, auntie, and I like it!

Miss McDowell: I'll say you are, but you're coming home with me right now.

Jeanie walks over toward Miss. McDowell.

Jeanie Sunshine: Must I? I've had loads of fun auntie. You won't believe the adventures I've had.

Miss McDowell: You'll come with me, gal, or that hickory switch you're going to get will add a count of three.

The two walk away toward Miss. McDowell's car. The kids settle down and stop tossing hickory nuts.

Jeanie Sunshine & Miss McDowell exit

Beau bends down, grabbing a handful, dropping them into his coat pocket.

Beau: We may have called a truce, but I'm getting ready just in case.

Fish: Our parents will be in for a while yet.

Beau: Yeah, they're always last out.

Fish: Come with me. I wanna show you something Beau, while we have time.

The two boys rush back into the church through the back door, avoiding the people standing around and at the front. They walk down the back hallway, until they reach the string on the ceiling to the attic door on the inside roof.

Fish: Squat down and let me stand on your shoulders, Beau.

Beau: OK; (*Beau squats down)*

Fish: (*Gets up onto Beau's shoulders);* Now stand up slowly and steadily.

Beau: OK, but hang on!

Beau stands slowly. Fish places his hands on the wall. Fish reaches out, grabbing the string, and pulls the door down. A folding ladder sits on the door. He pulls the ladder down so that it reaches the floor.

Fish: Follow me boy.

Beau: Where the Sam Hill are we going?

Fish: You'll see. I found this last Sunday.

Beau: If we get caught in here, we'll both be sore hurt for a month of Sundays.

Fish: (*Places his right index finger across his lips)*; Shhhh! (*whispers);* Follow me.

The two boys straddle the rafters in the roof, making their way to the right, until they get to a hole with a chandelier flange bolted over it. There is a two inch gap between the hole and the flange.

Fish: (*Places his right index finger over his lips*): Shhh! *(Fish points down, gazing through the gap).*

On the inside is a room on the other side of the main sanctuary wall. There is a desk up against the wall beside the door leading into the sanctuary. Four offering plates sit on the desk filled high with green cash. Soon the door to the sanctuary opens. The preacher enters donning an ankle length black robe. He takes each plate, pouring the cash into a large inside pocket on the robe. The last offering plate fills the pocket on the right hand side.

Beau: *(whispering*) My word, Hoss! The hand of God shall strike hard. Fear the lightning.

Fish: Did you see that?

Beau: Yeah, sure did! Can't believe it, 'n neither is nobody else.

Fish: Let's go. Let's get out of here like we came in. I' ve been a-watching this for three

Sundays now. That's why I like being uncivilized. Uncivilized people don't do such bad things like that. When we go outside you'll see the preacher walkin' over to the parsonage, smokin' a fat cigar when his back turns. I hear he drinks whiskey too. Imagine that, if ya will, ole hoss!

Fish & Beau exit as they entered

Act 3

Scene 1

Monday morning

Students are gathering in front of the porch on the school house. The door opens. Beau is walking up from the small bus. Mrs. McNeill steps out onto the porch. She steps to the left.

Mrs. McNeill: *(Shaking the hand bell); Ring-a ling! Ring-a ling! Ring-a ling!*

The students line up single file before the door. Beau walks in at the rear of the line. He lays his right hand on his side. He realizes he has on the same dress coat he had on the day before. The students step across the threshold. Each one walks toward their desks.

Mrs. McNeill: Good morning students. It appears it's going to be a pretty day!

Tammy Two Step: (*smiles bashfully*) Good morning Mrs. McNeill.

CL: (*nods*) Good morning Mrs. McNeill.

Curtis Curleyhead: (*smiles*) Good Morning Mrs. McNeill.

Leon the Flea-back: Good morning Mrs. McNeil.

Darwell the Flea-back: Good morning Mrs. McNeil.

Sandy Slinky: (*smiles intelligently*) Good morning Mrs. McNeil.

Beau: (*smirks*) Good morning Mrs. McNeill.

Beau walks toward the desks, sitting to the left of Sandy.

Beau:(*turns toward Sandy*) I hated to get out of bed this morning, felt so good in bed.

Sandy Slinky: Smiles.

Beau: I'd ruther be fishin' to tell the truth.

Sandy Slinky: (*Smiles);* I can believe that. I'll be the highly paid nurse manager, my friends Twyla and Kim tell me, where you and your kind 'll be the low wage janitors and security guards.

Beau: That breakfast grandma fixed was so good.

Sandy Slinky: (Smiles); Enjoy fine food while you can.

Beau: I had bacon, a fried egg, a dash of corn beef, grits and toast. Boy, it sure was good!

Sandy Slinky: (laughs and smiles); Tomorrow it will be nab-corn, wood tripe, Indian Potatoes, deer cabbage 'N elf-mustard, boy.

Beau: What about you?

Sandy Slinky: Sticks her tongue out at him and makes a face.

Beau: What does that mean?

Sandy: Slinky: Nothing, just—; (*makes a face and sticks her tongue out again*)

Beau: I don't know how to take that.

Sandy Slinky: Take it however you want. You kin bend over 'N take it like that, if you'd like.

Beau: How am I supposed to take that answer?

Sandy Slinky: Same way, boy. I really don't care.

Beau: That hurts my feelings.

Sandy Slinky: Why should I care?

Beau: Cause I care.

Sandy Slinky: Well that's your problem, boy now.

Beau: But you seem like the type who might care.

Sandy Slinky: But I don't. What more do we have to talk about?

Beau: All I wanted to do was talk.

Sandy Slinky: *(Smiles intelligently);* but we shouldn't talk. Look, class is soon to start.

Beau: What did you have for breakfast?

Sandy Slinky: *(Smiles*); I can clearly see what I am dealing with in a person like you, boy

Mrs. Allen: hands out sheets with addition and subtraction problems on them.

Mrs. Allen: Class, today we have to begin with dedicating more time into learning math. It's all my fault, I take full blame for everything. I had rather read and do songs than do math. You need to learn it, however. How many fingers am I holding up?

The entire class: Five.

Mrs. Allen: When I take away two, how many are left?

The entire class: Three.

Mrs. Allen: Now, when I double that, how many am I holding up?

Gene Coffee: Six.

Mrs. Allen: Great job, Gene. When I take away four, how many remain?

Jill: two.

Mrs. McNeil: Great! Well, I want you to get to work on these problems. You have enough time remaining before morning recess to do these problems. Any person who doesn't make a hundred must remain inside and at morning Break, redo them. He will not be allowed to play outside until he makes one hundred. Any person who doesn't finish will not be allowed to go outside and play. So all of you need to get to it.

All of the students work. Gene hands his paper in first. He grades out at one hundred. Jill hands her's in next, and grades out. Peanuts hands her's in and grades out. Sandy hands her's in and grades out. Everybody else finishes their papers and grades out, except the Flea-back, the YaHoos, and Beau. These students are forced to remain inside.

Mrs. McNeill: *(shakes the hanbell) Jing a-ling! Jing a-ling! Jing a-ling!*

Mrs. Allen: Alright, Mrs. McNeill rang the bell. It's time to line up, besides all of those who must remain inside.

Beau: Must I remain inside, Mrs. McNeill?

Mrs. McNeill: Yes, those are our rules. You are no kind of exception.

Beau is sitting in the second row from the door. The students walk past him. Sandy makes a face at him. She walks toward the door. She sticks her tongue out at him as she walks past. A few minutes later Beau finishes his work. He turns it in. Mrs. Allen grades it. He makes a hundred. Beau walks out the door and across the porch. Fish waits at the steps for him.

Beau: I was about to die in-there.

Fish: I felt for you. I can only imagine how stuffy it must have felt.

Beau: I barely made it. Breathing fresh air is so good.

Fish: Why does that girl keep sticking her tongue out at you like she does?

Beau: I don't know. She's smart, but kind O'stupid at the same time.

Fish: She kind of has an attitude, if ya ask me, honestly.

Beau: Sort of. I agree.

Fish: I just don't know what I'd do with a gal like her.

Beau: I don't know either, maybe nothin'.

Fish: She can't be allowed to get away with it, if you ask me.

Beau: Maybe when the right mood strikes me, I don't know.

Fish: Yeah, her time has come.

Beau: What I really want is for Peanuts to talk with me again.

Fish: How come you like her so much?

Beau: She is really smart, and is so much fun to be around.

Fish: She is real-skinny to me, and walks around like she is scared of everybody.

Beau: Oh, she's more fun than a bass on a hook. You just gotta know her.

Fish: Why does she stay away from you?

Beau: Cause I keep on getting in so much trouble.

Fish: I'll say yes to that. Maybe she's smarter than I took her for.

Beau: Well, I don't mean to. Crazy things just kind O' happen.

Fish: My daddy keeps on telling me the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Beau: I don't mean to, I really don't! You gotta believe me, Fish. Somebody always messes with me or something happens, and I wind up deep in the mud.

Fish: Well, you gotta do something Beau.

Beau glances up from his speaking with Fish. He sees Sandy Slinky in a group of girls by the bleachers. She has her back turned to him. He shoves his hands inside his jacket pockets, feeling the hickory nuts he dropped in the day before. Slowly he walks in her direction. He moves until he is somewhat near her. She turns her head as she speaks to a girl beside her, so that the side of it is facing him. He tosses the hickory nut. The nut flies through the air, striking Sandy directly in the side of her head. It makes a loud knock when it hits her. Beau turns around, running back over toward Fish, CL, and Gene.

Fish: I can tell by the way you are running, you are up to something.

Beau: I can't believe my magic shot! Did you see that, yonder boy?

Fish: What do you mean?

Beau: I tossed a hickory nut from forty feet away and struck Sandy in the side of the head with it.

Fish: *(sneers*) See what I mean, boy?

Beau: Oh no, Hoss, it's all good. She never saw me! I made it out O' the combat zone without a single hitch.

Fish: You think that, do you?

Beau: Oh, it's true, I'm telling you.

Fish: It's true, it's true, until you break into.

Beau: Hitting her in the head with a hickory nut isn't that bad. All she ever wants to do when I try to talk to her, is stick her tongue out at me.

Fish: I'm glad it's you and not me.

Mrs. McNeill: (*shakes the handbell*) *Ring! Ring! Jing-a-ling!*

Fish: Come on boy! It's time for class to begin.

Fish and Beau race toward the porch. Beau spots Peanuts as he is walking up the steps.

Beau: Hey, Peanuts!

Peanuts: Don't you dare talk to me, boy! Go away now.

Beau: Come here. I just want to say hey.

Peanuts: I have to stay away from your kind.

Beau: Can't you just say hey?

Peanuts: You make the YaHoo and them Flea-bacs look good, boy.

Beau: What kind of thing is that to say?

Peanuts: It's the truth.

Beau: Tell the truth, snag a tooth.

Peanuts: Mumzie says your bad.

Beau: I'm not bad! I'm real-good.

Peanuts: Well, why don't you do some real good for a change then.

Beau: I do, everyday.

Peanuts: Then maybe I'll tie the yellow ribbon 'round that ole live oak tree.

Beau: Pauses, smiling as Peanuts walks through the door of the school house ahead of him.

The students walk inside the school house single file, one behind the other. They walk over, taking their seats at their desks. The last student takes his seat. The classroom begins to settle down. Mrs. McNeill walks. She pauses in front of the chalkboard.

Mrs. McNeill: Class, before we commence this morning, something has been brought to my attention. Does anybody have any idea what this might be?

The entire class: Silence, students glance around at one another.

Mrs. McNeill: Nobody in here has any idea what I am talking about, eh?

The entire class: Gasp, students stare at one another drop jawed.

Mrs. McNeill: (*Pauses at Beau's desk*) Son, tell 'em what I'm referring to here?

Beau: *(Gasps);* I don't know Mrs. McNeill.

Mrs. McNeill: Don't you feel like you need to stand up before the class here and apologize to somebody for something?

Beau: No, or ah.., I can't remember.

Mrs. McNeill: You mean you can't remember doing anything to anybody recently?

Beau: No Mrs. McNeill, I can't remember.

Mrs. McNeill: Well, I think it's high time we freshen your memory a bit first thing this mornin'. Stand up, boy!

Beau: Stands up.

Mrs. McNeill: You don't recall doing anything to this gal? (*Mrs. McNeill points over toward Sandy Slinky)*

Beau: Oh, oh, hmm, I think I do, now.

Mrs. McNeill: Well, boy you walk to the front of this class here beside me.

Beau walks to the front of the class, standing beside Mrs. McNeill.

Mrs. McNeill: Now you tell this class what you did, son!

Beau: Oooh, hmm, I threw a hickory nut over to a mouse, and he tossed it and hit Sandy square in the head!

Mrs. McNeill: (sagging, hard face) Now, you come along with me boy, and stand in front of my desk here. I got something for you!

Beau steps to the side, standing in front of Mrs. McNeill's desk

Mrs. McNeill opens a left hand drawer on her desk, taking out a rolled up razor strap. She unrolls it.

Mrs. McNeill: Now son, I want you to bend o'er that desk here, and hold on for dear life, cause I'm fixing to knock you slam through that wall yonder, so help me good Lord in heaven above!

Beau bends over the desk. He squints his eyes as he does. Mrs. McNeill swings the leather strap with unyielding energy.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

The entire class: *(Gasp);* Aww! Ohhh! She got him good.

Scene 2

Lunch recess

Beau is out by the bleachers with CL

CL: Boy, you got a good one, did you?

Beau: Yeah, but it wasn't deserved.

CL: Look what you did, boy. You're always doing something. You're like that boy, William Little, you told us all about from yer old school.

Beau: All I did was hit that girl in the head with a hickory nut.

CL: But it hurt her, boy.

Beau: Naw, it didn't! She's just a cry baby. What you staring at so?

CL: She's a girl, son, and girl's can't take it like we can.

Beau: So's Jeanie. Jeanie didn't cry, remember? She was hit by hickory nuts a-plenty Pop.

CL: Yeah boy, but no girl anywhere is like that wild flower, Jeanie.

CL:(*jerks his head back)* Look across that ball field down next to the woods yonder.

Beau: At the YaHoo and them Flea-backs?

CL: Yeah, I see them ganging up a lot lately.

Beau: You git feelings?

CL: Yeah, somethin' 's a-cookin'.

Beau: Seeing that does give feelin's.

Peanuts walks up in a group of girls.

Beau: Hey, Peanuts!

Peanuts: Don't you dare! Stay away. (*She turns her back)*.

Beau: Can't you say hey?

Betty Rae: (*Turns around);* Can't you see? She don't want to talk to you, crazy boy?

Beau: I only want to say hey.

Betty Rae: Sluff it, boy! Go slip slide away somewhere in a Slim Jim.

Jill: Yeah, sluff it up the fluff, boy! Go take the Slim Jim your in, into a pig pen.

Denine: *(laughing);* Yeah, sluff it until ya huff 'N puff, boy! Peanuts don't want to play.

All exit

Across the baseball field, next to the woods

Klavan Clodhopper: (huffs) He's got it coming to him. Look at him over yonder.

Leon the Flea-back: O.K. doc, what 's our plan?

Chris the hippie: We're cooking on it. Boys. Us foxes is-a stirrin' about this hen house here!

Airic Linberger: Hey Chris dog! *(in a gruff voice*) What about the old witch doctor's house back in them woods thar, yonder ways on the hill by the creek?

Chris the hippie: What about it?

Airic Lindberger: Is it any good for anything?

Klavin Clodhopper: I've spent many a night laid up in there. The likes of you could live there N be happy.

Leon the Flea-back: Will it keep the rain off?

Klavin the Clodhopper: Yeah, well and good. A little mouse runs hither and thither, but other than that, all is well.

Airic Lindbverger: Good.. *(smirks, tilts his head sideways)*. Where is Cynthia at?

Leon the Flea-back: Cynthia who?

Airic Lindberger: Oh come on, hoe digger.. I don't know! One of your people.

Leon the Flea-back: Oh, oh, awe… she's around, she's around. Can be a mite tough to be found.

Aric Lindberger: She didn't go to class today, right?

Leon the Flea-back: Naw, naw, right, right. She slipped away in the dark of night.

Aric Lindverger: (*tilts his head sideways*) Is she around somewhere in the woods hereabouts?

Leon the Flea-back: Yeah, I think so. She had a buck-accord over by the clover on the Creek, I think.

Airic Lindberger: (*chuckles);* I should 'uv known it.

Chris the hippie: I think I finally figured you out. The old Witch Doctor's house is a dumb good start fer a ferst night out. Know whut I mean?

Both laugh

Airic Lindberger: (*laughing);* We'll be sure to toss some hotdog pieces out for their friendly dogs dropping by to see if anybody is home, eh? Dogs eating our hotdogs have a way of straying. Living by our wits has taught us that much, which is more than this school has ever taught any of us.

Leon the Flea-back: He's an old, big money buck ripe for the squeezin', but what's in the mix, Pop rock?

Airic Lndburger: She has a chore. I'm scared to ask how old.

Leon the Flea-back: Like what? (*shrugs*) This buck is maybe twenty, I think. He slaves in

the goober plant hereabouts. But somethin' beats nutin'.

Airic Lindbverger: She's half friends with that mush-chick of Beau, right?

Leon the Flea-back: Yeah. What's a stir?

Airic Lindberger: I want her to bring her out here, to that wild straw-berry patch in the corner ova yond-a ways..

Leon the Flea-back: When?

Airic Lindberger: Today. Can it be arranged?

Leon the Flea-back: What makes you think she'll go to strawberries?

Airic Lindbverger: She does, all the time with Beau and Sandy.

Leon the Fea-back: What's cookin'?

Airic Lindberger: *(smirks*) We all 're in need of a little accord, I think. I think I know how to get it.

Klavin Clodhopper: (*gasps*) I get it! Oh, I get it, dog. Sounds great to me. That'll fix the punk fer good!.

Leon the Flea-back: (*Glares over at Airic who laughs);* You're heading for a crash.

Airic Lindberger: Oh, roast me slow, 'N Let the fiddler on the roof play his sob-tune.

Leon the Flea-back: So it will. Maybe this day.

Klavin Clodhopper: I don't have any Razzle-Dazzle yet, but I have plenty of cured Cassina.

Leon the Flea-back: That's weak.

Klavin Clodhopper: Enough does it though.

Leon the Flea-back: Half pound should buy the job. Aw, I say perfect.. (thumbs up)

Klavin Clodhopper: We want our prey on the strawberry patch by last break today.

Leon the Flea-back: You've said the word. Where's the fruit?

Airic Lindberger: By the pine tree ova yond-a ways.

Leon the Flea-back walks over toward a large pine. He finds a plastic bag filled half full with dried brown hashed up leaves. He picks the bag up high before his face. He sniffs inside. He smiles broadly.

Leon the Flea-back, Klavin Clodhopper, Airic Lindberger, and Chris the hippie exit

Back in class

Lunch time

Mrs. McNeill: Class the math worksheets have all been turned in. Everybody scored one hundred. I think it's excellent. Lets line up across the front of the room here, then we'll go on to lunch. After we eat, you may all go outside as you finish. Today is warm and the weather is good. All of us need more fresh air, I think.

Students line a single file across the front of the classroom. One at a time they make their way into the small room in the rear of the school. Several walk outside through the rear door. Many eat while sitting on the steps. Beau grabs his lunch box from the bookshelf where they are stored. He glances across the room. He spots Peanuts on the floor underneath the window eating. He walks over toward her.

Beau: Hello, no see in a long time.

Peanuts: (*Angry face);* Don't dare talk to me! I've had enough with you.

Beau: But– I didn't mean to…

Peanuts: I hear what you say. Please go away, Beau.

Beau: I don't want to leave you.

Peanuts closes her lunchbox. She arises from the floor. She walks out the back door. She takes a seat outside on the steps. She opens her lunch box. She begins eating her peanut butter & jelly sandwich. Cynthia the Flea-back slowly walks up toward her.

Cynthia the Flea-back: *(smiling warmly*) Hey girl? How now? Do little ‘n take long trips.

Peanuts: Man problems, friend. Can’t live with ‘em or without ‘em.

Cynthia the Flea-back: (*chuckles)* No such problems being a Flea-back.

Peanuts: I don’t know what to do, Cynthia.

Cynthia the Flea-back: We could walk ‘N talk about it. Let’s go!

Peanuts: Yeah, that would be cool. I need a long walk.

Cynthia the Flea-back: Finish eating. Plenty of time yet, girl.

Peanuts: I’m through. Didn’t have much. Let’s go, girl.

Peanuts: *(closes her box, lays it on the steps, leaps up*) Lets walk. I need it bad.

Cynthia the Flea-back; (*Walking slowly across the baseball field*)
: How now with your man-problems? (*Bursts out laughing*)

Peanuts: Beau is my first pick, but he gets into way too much trouble for me. I love him, but…

Cynthia the Flea-back: (*laughs*) He’s crazy, for sure!

Peanuts: I tell him to straighten up, but he keeps on…

Cynthia the Flea-back: How long have you known him?

Peanuts: This year makes two.

Cynthia the Flea-back: Let him go. There are other things in the world more important.

Peanuts: *(sighs*) I like going on long walks.

Cynthia the Flea-back: Me too. See the rabbit in the grass yonder? See the squirrels?

Peanuts: The song birds sound so nice. The wisteria this year hangs in the air. I feel that ghosts are all around us, Cynthia.

Cynthia the Flea-back: Wow, me too. Matter of fact, I know they are.

Peanuts: Have you ever seen one?

Cynthia the Flea-back: Sure, I have. *(laughs*) I see ‘em on a regular basis round hiah, girl!

Peanuts: What did it look like?

Cynthia the Flea-back: A shadow person once, mist, a feeling somebody was around.

Peanuts: Wow! I want to see one.

Cynthia the Flea-back: Really? Well I’ll show you some.

Peanuts: Where at? I’ve looked hard but ne’er found one.

Cynthia the Flea-back: *(cuts her eyes)* Down by the wild strawberry patch.

Peanuts: Which one?

Cynthia the Flea-back: The one in the corner by the far ditch.

Peanuts: Oh yeah! I know that place, but I’ve never seen any ghosts.

Cynthia the Flea-back: But you will. Come on with me.

(*Both walking toward the corner)* Peanuts: The wild strawberry patch is in the woods thirty yards back.

Cynthia the Flea-back: Wow, look at the wild flowers! See the yaupon bush movin’ yonder in the wind?

Peanuts: Yeah, they always grow back here. Some wild Rhododendrons do too.

Cynthia the Flea-back: So Beau walks with you down in here, huh?

Peanuts: Yeah, he picks me bouquets of rhododendrons and wild pink roses.

Cynthia the Flea-back: You didn't make any accords with him, did you?

Peanuts: (*laughs)*; No? Why? I have no ideas of such. What do you mean?

Cynthia the Flea-back: Boys often take girls down into the woods to make accords, you Know. At least Flea-back boys sure do with us.

Peanuts: Never heard of such. Us humans don't do such things.

Cynthia the Flea-back: (*laughs, raises eyebrows)*; Yeah? Well look at the strawberry patch.

Peanuts: It's so big and there 're so many. They're smaller than the ones Mum buys in the store, but so much sweeter, Cynthia.

A stick pops behind the two on either side.

Peanuts: (*whispers*) Did you hear that? What was it?

Cynthia the Flea-back: A ghost, I figure?

Four huge lumbering male figures wearing ragged flannel shirts with bandannas covering their faces, step out of the woods quietly and slowly from either side. They walk up to Peanuts on either side.

A gruff voice: You're coming away with us. No use resisting. Come along quietly, or else.

Peanuts: What? Who are you? Help, Cynthia!

Cynthia the Flea-back: Never trust a blood enemy. Your granpappy ne'er told you that? You'll learn the ways of the real world soon, gal.

Peanuts: Enemy? What do you mean?

Cynthia the Flea-back: Flea-backs and all humans are enemies, and have been since

time began.

Peanuts: (*distressed voice);* But Cynthia! Why—-?

A hard hand of the gruff voice covers her mouth. Peanuts is taken from behind and from both sides. She is pulled along.

Gruff voice: You ‘re coming with us and doing as we say, or else. You got that, gal? You think you’re so good. You N yer kind ’ll learn not to throw any weight around with us real people!

Peanuts: *(in a terrified voice);* Yes, yes! (*Struggles) but, but—-!*

*Peanuts, Cynthia the Flea-back, the bandanna covered faces, exi*t

Scene 3

Tuesday morning

Students line up before the porch of the academy. Mrs. McNeill opens the door. She steps out on the porch. She rings the hand bell. Students walk inside, single file. They calmly take their seats.

Gene Coffee: We are having the May Pole dance soon.

Beau: It 'll be a while before May.

Gene Coffee: You know, Mr. McNeill does that at the Easter festival anyway.

Beau: I wasn’t here last year. There was no Maypole anything where I was.

Gene Coffee: You know, they have a big square dance after lunch and a hay ride!

Beau: That ‘ll be fun. I can’t wait myself

Gene Coffee: Who ‘s gonna be your dance mate?

Beau: I don't know, but I know who I hope will.

Gene Coffee: Who? Sandy?

Beau: I don't see any wrong in her, but I want Peanuts.

Gene Coffee: Well, Mrs Allen just called the roll. Did you hear?

Beau: So? What's so different about that?

Gene Coffee: Did you hear her name?

Beau: I can't say I was paying attention. I don't even hear my own name most of the time.

Gene Coffee: Well I was, and I didn't hear her name called.

Beau: Her Mumzie makes her help tend tobacco beds sometimes at this time of year.

Gene Coffee: Oh, O.k. Do you see her anywhere around?

Beau: No, (*glancing all around himself)* Can't say as I do.

Gene Coffee: Might better check on her. I got a bad feelin' to be honest.

Beau: Naw dog, she's fine. I'm not worried.

Friday morning

Students gather before the porch, talking. Mrs. McNeil rings the hand bell. The students line up at the door in single file. The line begins moving forward. The students all take their seats. Mrs. McNeil stands before the chalk board at the front of the class.

Mrs. McNeill: Everybody look around you this morning.

Students all gaze around at one another.

Mrs. McNeill: Do you notice anybody missing?

Several students: Yes Mrs. McNeill, Peanuts is not here!

Mrs. McNeill: That's right, she has not been here for three days now. Do any of you know where she is right now?

The whole class: No Mrs. McNeill! We have no idea.

Mrs. *Allen: (Walks up beside Mrs. McNeill);* Now is not the time to keep secrets. Her parents are worried sick. Her mother called the school in hysteria and crying. If any of you know, please tell us.

The whole class: We don't know Mrs. Allen!

Gene Coffee: (*Glances hard a Beau);* I told you to find her, boy! You should get another boot scalding fer this!

Mrs. Allen: The police have searched all around these woods hereabouts with helicopters and bloodhounds, and still can't find her. Help us if you can.

Beau: (*gasps);* This is terrible! Somebody must do something. Somebody must…!

Gene Coffee: I've been a-tellin' you, screw head!

Beau: (*gasps*!) I have to think of something!

Gene Coffee: And quick. Bloodhounds can't even find her.

Beau: Bloodhounds can be outfoxed. That is what I am a-feared of right now.

Gene Coffee: Bloodhounds can find anything and anybody. There's no way to outfox one.

Beau: If a big boar coon can, then so can a woods-wise man.

Gene Coffee: Where have you seen a coon outfox one at, boy?

Beau: GrandPap hunts often. I go with him at night. I love huntin' coon and possum.

Gene Coffee: How do ya fetch a coon the dogs miss?

Beau: On gut instinct, and with a light. Usually, almost always, he's still in the area.

Gene Coffee: You think Peanuts is in the area?

Beau: Gut says so, to be honest.

Gene Coffee: But she didn't outfox the hounds, somebody else did, right?

Beau: (*Swallows hard, gazing out);* Yeah, a-feared so. Some woodwise pig did…I think.

Gene Coffee: Like my grandma always says, the sand glass is a-running empty.

Beau: I'll find her. Ever-body is depending on it. I will, you wait and see!

Gene Coffee: How?

Beau: I got my ways, dog.

Gene Coffee: There's a way?

Beau: *(Sobs);* She's such a good gal. She didn't deserve any of this.

Jing a-ling! Jing a-ling! Jing a-ling!

Mrs. Allen: (*Shaking the hand bell);* It's time for morning break. Let's line up now!

Students line up at the door to go out. Mrs. McNeill opens the door. Students go out in single file, walking across the porch, down the steps, scattering into the school yard.

Beau: Walks down the steps, glancing around hysterically.

Crook: Boy, what are you a-lookin' fer so?

Beau: You seen Donna, Cap'n?

Crook: Donna Darlin'?

Beau: Yeah. I need her now more N ever.

Crook: Hambone, I saw her easin' into the edge of the woods behind the school house. She always sits down there and does something with them old pots she always

has around her. She's a real-weird one, let me tell ya.

Beau: Thanks. *(He begins walking in that direction)* You made my day bo-pop.

Crook: My stars 'n garters boy, you a-hittin' on her now?

In the edge of the wax myrtle and the yaupon bushes behind the school house

Beau: There you are! I kin see you a-sitting down through these trees, gal.

Donna Darling: (smiles) Long time no see, boy. I wondered when you'd come a runnin".

Beau: I didn't mean to ignore you.

Donna Darling: I know. I miss talking to ya. You still running with Peanuts?

Beau: Well, yes and no. You still doin' magic?

Donna Darling: (*smiling*) I live for that, always.

Beau: I need yer help. You just don't know how much.

Donna Darling: Anytime fan-doe, just let me know.

Beau: Can you see things?

Donna Darling: I kin see into the future, the past, and unseen things in the present.

Beau: Can you find Peanuts for me?

Donna Darling: *(smiles broadly*) Not a problem at all, honey. It's a poo-boy's job to find her.

Beau: Do you know how I can fetch her when you do find her?

Donna Darling: Not a problem. We have it all under control here, with me bein' cap'n of the ship..

Beau: *(Smiles);* Wow! I'm so happy, Donna!

Donna Darling: I was a-wondering why them police didn't ask me. They should never let dogs do what a good witch is so much better at. Don't you agree?

Beau: Well, why didn't you help, then?

Donna Darling: (smiles, shrugs) I would have honey, no problem any time, but you 're the first to ask little ole Me.

Beau: Tell me what to do.

Donna Darling: Walk over to that old pine stump hole yonder with me.

She arises, they walk.

Donna Darling: See how deep that 'on is, and how dark it is on the inside?

Beau: Yeah, it shows the world up here clear as a bell.

Donna Darling: See the water in it, and our reflection?

Beau: Yeah.

Donna Darling: Well, give me time to scry into it. You kin sit here if you want.

Beau: Do ya see anything yet?

Donna Darling: (turns, sighs) Boy, it takes time, and don't you dare talk to me when I'm a-scryin'!

Beau: I don't know if I kin wait that long.

Donna Darling: Well, since you asked me, you go on along your way, boy. When break is over 'N you git back into class, there 'll be a note on yer desk, inside that Jump Sally Jump book I saw you a-reading and had laid on it. It'll tell you what you gotta do to git her back. Any questions, then feel free to ask me. Stay here, and see me throw the spell and ask the water spirits to show me the way. (pauses, smiles, tilts her head) Kindly fetch that ole bowel for me in the trash pile back toward the school house, if you could, please, when you decide to go on yer way.

Beau: Sure! (steps out of the yaupon stand. Returns with an old army cook pot with the letters CSA stamped into the side.)

Donna Darling: Water in the hole, thy power is ne'er cold, Show me the way to make this boy's day. The boy is a-cryin' while I'm a-scryin', show me the sights so my eyes 'll be a-spyin'. The girl is lost to this boy's great cost, Please find her for us before her body is tossed.

Gazes inside the pot, dips some water from the hole, stirs with a dry twig

Donna Darling: A mite of this an' that,
A tongue of cat,
An ear of bat
Is where it's at.

A banshee's scream,
A nightmare dream,
A scale of rattlesnake-bream
Will be perfect,
It seems.

Find the demon's breath,
Before the flood it left,
That of the leader will be best,
High above the rest.
Bring earth's wickedness back down
Into their nest.

Beau: Thanks, a big thank you! You're not a witch, honey you 're an angel!

Donna Darling: Wait! I've always liked you, Beau, but everything has a price, my dear boy.

Beau: (*Gasps);* Well, what's your price? Ever-body has one now.

Donna Darling: Be mine for the next week, all mine, and be my partner at the Easter Festival square dance, and mine for the day.

Beau: Yeah, ooh, sure, (*swallows and smiles)*; sure!

Donna Darling: There's more now, boy. Grab ya wad hard fer this one.

Beau: Sure now, oooh, tell me.

Donna Darling: I want a great big kiss every day, right here! (*Points to her left cheek*); I want a nice one at the Easter dance too.

Beau: Ohh, sure, sure, Donna. (smiles) No problem with that my doll.

Donna Darling: I want you to tell everybody at the Easter dance you are all mine, and nobody else's!

Beau: Ooo, OK, Ok! Sure.

Donna Darling: OK, now you kin go on now, big boy!

Donna Darling exits

Back out by the bleachers

CL: Where have you a-been at, boy?

Crook: You've been a-talkin'' to that witch, haven't ya?

Beau: Sort of, (*shrugs)* yeah, I suppose.

Crook: Well, what did she say to ya?

Beau: Oh, nothin' much.

In the direction of the school house: Ring a-ling! Ring a-ling! Ring a-ling!

Crook: Yonder 's the class bell, boys! Let's go before we're late.

CL, Crook, and Beau exit

Scene 4

Back in class

Students are getting seated. Beau sees the Jump Sally Jump reading book on his desk.

Beau: Opens book and finds neatly folded note. Opens note:

Note: *(In a girl's printed handwriting);* The YaHoo and the Flea-back have her held captive. Her captors are Klavan Clodhopper, Chris the hippie, Leon the Flea-back, and Marvin the Flea-back. She was tricked by Cynthia the Flea-back.

Beau: (*Mumbles*) Dash it all! She thought Cynthia was her friend. How could she do that?

Note: She's tied up in grandma Sadie Bizzell's Plantation house in Rake Shin Bay, and guarded by the YaHoo and the Flea-backs. She's fed and treated fairly well. They want two thousand dollars for her release. The police are searching these woods here and the growed up area 'round the old witch Doctors House on the hill near the creek. They only pretended to have her there, so the dogs would be outfoxed. The dogs have picked up hotdog sections filled with shredded clear glass. They lay down, sicken, and will eventually die.

Beau: (*gasps*) There's no way! Nobody has that kind of money.

Note: To get her back, go to the hollow holly tree with the large limbs covered in mistletoe, down past the woodshed. There's a pretty nine inch by nine inch box inside. DO NOT OPEN IT. It's filled with The Watcher's Chief, Artegoph's breath. You'll be cursed and worse, if you do.

<u>Don't set the box out until after you get this black spot.</u> When
The enemy opens it, woe unto him, and the sweet cherub from beyond will lift Peanuts into a heavenly bed of four leaf clovers after the Easter festival dance.

Beau:(*mutters);* I can't believe this, but I'll do it. I'll do this, by Joe Poker Doe!

Lights Dim

Monday Morning

Students are walking toward their desks. Mrs. McNeill stands in front of the chalkboard.

Mrs. McNeill: Class, the little Lewis girl has still not been found. Nobody knows anything about where she might be. The police still haven't found anything. Her parents are sick with worry. Should anybody hear or find out anything, then please let some of us know. We also have found signs the school may have been broken into. Nothing was stolen or damaged, but we are not sure why it happened or who may have done it. Bad people are in this neighborhood for sure, so be careful out there, please!

Gene Coffee: (*raises his right hand);* Some YaHoo somewhere got her. I can tell you!

Mrs. Allen: Nobody knows anything as of yet. Anybody, if you find out or hear something, please let us know.

Beau finds a white sheet of white construction paper on his desk with a black spot in the center.

Black spot: (*has written*) $2000.00 ASAP, or else.

Beau: Folds the paper and places it into his shirt pocket.

Mrs. McNeill: We are going to work on math problems again today. We will not finish before morning recess, but we will come back in and complete this then.

Time passes, students work

Mrs. McNeill: *(rings the hand bell*); Ring a-ling! Ring a-ling! Ring a-ling!

Students walk out of the school house single file, across the porch, down the stairs.

Crook: Well what do ya know? Anything shown up yet?

Beau: (sighs, drops head) Nothin' yet for sure. Might have some small leads.

Crook: Time 's a-wastin. Passin' time nears the bell of death's knell chime. My granny

always says that.

Beau: I have a winning feeling. You know what I'm a talkin' 'bout here?

Crook: What are you gonna do?

Beau: Walk with me for a few. Crook. There 's a few thangs we need to find round here

Crook: Where? What on earth are we headed into now?

Beau: To the backside of the school house.

Crook: (*shrugs, laughs*) Sure, OK.

Lights darken
Beau and Crook walk

Crook: What's up doc?

Beau: Walk with me into these woods.

Crook: What are we a-lookin' for ?

Beau: The old woodshed, and a thing or three beyond.

Crook: The one where you got scalded?

Beau: Yeah, that one, where the noise went rat-a-tat-tat.

Crook: I see it up ahead in the bushes.

Beau: I see it too.

Crook: Well, here we are. How now brown cow?

Beau: Now we're looking for a certain kinda holly tree.

Crook: What kinda holly tree chickaree?

Beau: A big one that's holler, with a bunch of mistletoe on its limbs.

Crook: Ova yonder ways I see a big one, and there ‘s mistletoe on the limbs, *(points*) look!

Beau: Yeah! I see it too, beside the old Indian grave-mound yonder, boy.

Crook: Is that the one? There ‘re more O’ them thangs round here.

Beau: We’ll find out. (starts walking)

Crook: Well here we are at it. What’s so special?

Beau: Yeah, here on the backside it’s certainly holler.

Crook: What else?

Beau: (*gasps, stoops)* And there it is…

Crook: What? That box? It's pretty with the lavender hydrangea flowers and big pink ribbon and all. Other than that, what’s so special about it?

Beau: Here, now follow me!

Crook: Where in the Sam Hill are we a-goin’ now, Pop rock?

Beau: You’ll see! Follow me dook-chute.

Crook: Gimme that box ‘N we’ll find out what ’s in it.

Beau: (*laughs)*; Follow me! Stop yer barkin’ pup, before you wind up gittin’ squashed.

Across the ball field past the hog’s head, into the edge of the woods beyond.

Crook: What ‘s this about?

Beau: You’ll see. Watch what we do.

Crook: Why are you settin’ that thang down on this old cedar stump?

Beau: You'll see. The trap is now set, Pop.

Crook: The YaHoo and the Flea-back 'll get it.

Beau: Yeah, I know. That's the plan.

Crook: You know, I've always heard these woods are haunted.

Beau: I have to.

Crook: But there 's loads of wild strawberries in here, daisies, wood tripe, deer cabbage, ramps, 'N honeysuckle this time of year, Hoss. Remember how back at the Christian Academy we used to pull the stem from the backside of the flowers, and suck the nectar off? Ole gramps 'll have a field day here!

Beau: I guess that's what the YaHoo and the Flea-backs live off of.

Crook: Yeah, ole Airic's Mumzie beat him, his brothers, and his sisters out of their shack, I hear-ed.

Beau: Oh yeah? Where is it?

Crook: That wrecked up white shack in the woods, on the other side of the field next to the woods across from the old railroad depot.

Beau: Ain't no power in there, Pa. Ain't no septic tank.

Crook: I know, and the shack was growed up all around.

Beau: Me and this crazy girl I know, named Jeanie, used to sneak over there an' plunder.

Crook: Find anything? What was with it, might I ask?

Beau: Yeah boy, old phonographs, hand turning washing machines, a washboard, an' pieces of rusty tools. Nothin' else.

Crook: Wow! Where is she from? Sounds like I could know her.

Beau: She tole me from the witch house over in the Dardin Woods. Seems like

somehow her and Donna Darlin' are kin, or somethin.

Crook: I know where that is. That's the one with all of them skulls in it, with the walls plastered in newspaper articles telling about the graves they came from bein' robbed. Donna was livin' in that house too, I think..

Beau: Believe it's so. There 's a cave back-up in there, with big clay Indian pots full of arrowheads, tommy-hawk heads, spear points, beads, and wampum on leather strings.

Crook: How do you know?

Beau: GrandPap 'N me sneaked in the Darden Woods one night, a deer huntin'.

Crook: Wow! Let's you 'N me go up in-there one night.

Beau: Sure thang! It's been a while for me.

Crook: First hazy half moon we'll go doc..

Beau: Jeanie tole me she sneaked away one time and lived in that ole house before.

Crook: Wow! Who is this Jeanie vixen ?

Beau: Oh, she's the queen O' livin' uncivilized. She's my kind O' woman, to tell the truth.

Crook: So why not? You a-feared or somethin' boy?

Beau: She done tole me she'll run with me all day long, but she ain't tying herself down to no man anywhere.

Crook: Sounds interestin'. She needs a tamin' though.

Beau: Naw now Pa, wild and uncivilized is definitely my favorite kind!

Crook: Well, she sounds like a colt in need of a good break . I want to meet this filly.

laughs

Beau: So why did ole Airic get beat out like that?

Crook: Gotta make his own way. His Mumzie makes her ’n a-courtin’ men and in small nabs, they say. Children gotta to make their ’n.

Beau: Ole Airic sure has some nice parents.

Crook: We’re both blessed boy. Let's walk, Beau. (glances around) I got an uneasy feeling in here all O’ sudden.

Crook and Beau exit

Scene 5

Evening break, late

A soupy fog eases across the landscape as the woods begin to darken.

Leon the Flea-back: It's so fun slinkin’ along watching the schoolhouse from in here.

Chris the hippie: I like the life I live, myself. Night and day, I’m a free bird, a-livin’ by my wits.

Marvin the Flea-back: Yeah, we do what we want. We live by the sword.

Klavin Clodhopper: I’ve got the best O’ both worlds, myself. I’m in and I’m out.

Airic Lindberger: *(usual gruff voice);* Yeah, but we have things to do while we’re here, boys.

Cynthia the Flea-back: I see it's foggy and gettin’ late, but do I spy somethin’ up ahead?

Chris the hippie: I’ll say it's somethin’ alright. This fog needs to thin for me to see.

Marvin the Flea-back: We need some light, honey pots!

Airic Lindberger: Looks like a fancy flower covered blue box to me, with a pink ribbon around it… ! What is it?

Chris the hippie: I think payday just came through for us, boys! (*laughs*)

Klavin Clodhopper: I can't believe it! I'm so happy, boys!

Darwell the Flea-back: Are all of ya gonna talk about it? Let's open it!

Cynthia the Flea-back: (*snatches the box up from the stump);* I'm opening, so it's mine!

Klavin Clodhopper: No! We're all gatherin' round for this pinata party, my sweet grapes.

Marvin the Flea-back: Boy, your so big, Cindy', if'n it is food you sho don't need any!

Cynthia the Flea-back: (*snatches the lid from the box)*; Look in an' see for yer-selves, you saucy bandi-coots!

The box: (*A great wind roar).* Haunting laughter, mysterious voice;

Mysterious voice: Cercies, Hecate', Media, Paiphae, now roams abroad. May the cherished Priestess of Endor finally fulfill sweet Gehenna's secular call!

Lights suddenly dim.*They all vanish, box falls onto the ground*

Cynthia the Flea-back, Marvin the Flea-back, Leon the Flea-back, Klavin Clodhopper, Airic Lindbverger, Chris the hippie, exit as the curtain drops.

Act 4

Scene 1

Good Friday Easter Festival

morning

Students gather around the school house porch. May pole is up. The upper grades students are milling all around. Excitement is in the air.

Mrs. McNeill: Students, today is bright and sunny, and going to be a fabulous day, I know! We have lots planned. We have the May Pole. We have toe sack races. We have the dunking seat and the horseshoe toss, not to mention our foot race around the field. Participate and enjoy! Prizes are given out to winners.

Donna Darling: (*gazes over*) My time in your company this week has been most delightful, Beau.

Beau: The best is yet to come, my dear!

Donna Darling: I'll sure stay right by your side.

CL: Ooo now! Lookie here. How now?

Fish: Ooo wee! Look what I see.

Gene Coffee: You are taking the broom for a flight together tonight, eh?

Twayla Clothcutter: Umhmm! What is Peanuts going to say about this?

Tonya Timorous: It's more like, what am I gonna say? What is this? (*Points, smiles)*

Beau: Well everybody, this is my dolly for today! (*Smiles, bows)*

Cheers, claps

Sandy Slinky: What happened to Peanuts?

Gene Coffee: Nobody knows yet.

Fish: Look yonder (*points)*. Let's do the apple toss!

Fish and CL walk over to the stand

Beau:(*glances over at Donna*) What do you want to do?

Donna Darlin': I'll toss the horseshoes with you.

Beau: Sounds good. Let's go!

People stand around clapping

Crook: Oh look out now, they got a band about to play.

Gene Coffee: Its fiddles and banjos!

Band plays Turkey in The Straw

Twyla Clothcutter: Let's all dance!

Tonya Two Step: Dose-y-Dose!

Beau: I'm a cloggin' fool. Look at me!

Donna Darlin' : I can wiggle my nose and change the tune.

Crook: Wow! Blow our minds, Donna girl!

Band plays Foggy Mountain Breakdown

Twyla Clothcutter: Wow! What a gal!

Crook: I don't believe it!

Beau: (smiles, laughs) She tole you so!

Tonya Two Step: Seein' is believin' honey! We'll dance the day and the night away.

Donna Darling: Want another?

Gene Coffee: One more time and somethin' is definitely up.

Donna Darling: *(nods her head in the direction of the band);* This rhythm be right!

Band plays Rocky Top

Lead singer: Wish that I was on ole Rocky Top
Down in them Tennessee Hills,
Ain't no smoggy smoke near this cabin I've got,
Ain't no electric bills.

Once I had a gal on Rocky Top,
Half bear, the other half cat,
Wild as a mink, but sweet as soda pop,
And cagy as a barnyard rat..

Rocky Top, you'll always be
Home sweet home to me,
Good ole Rocky Top,
Rocky Top Tennessee!

Corn won't grow on Rocky Top,
Dirt be too rocky by far,
That's why good folks all round my cabin lot
Get their's from a mason jar!

Rocky Top, you'll always be
Home sweet home to me,
Good ole Rocky Top,
Rocky Top Tennessee!

Fish: Boy this dancing is fun.

Donna Darlin': (*points*) Something is a stir yonder near the porch!

Crook: Yeah, everybody is putting ever-thang down and headin' over yonder!

Beau: The music is stopping, so let ‘s go!

Mrs. McNeill: (*addresses the gathering students from the porch)*; Everybody! Reason we’re all gathering is that it’s time for the great Easter egg hunt. Some of you remember this from last year.

Unknown voice in the crowd: Yeah! This is the one with the Lucky Egg!

Mrs. McNeill: Yes, that’s right. We have the lucky egg this year, with a grand prize inside. This lucky egg on this occasion is emerald green. Last year it was blue. It's a big one like last year, however. So let’s gather ‘round! One, two, three, let's go!

Fish: If you find it or if I find it, let's agree to split what’s inside.

Beau: Alright, since you’re my best friend.

Gene Coffee: An’ Peanuts isn’t around!

Donna Darling: But I’m around, honey!

Beau: (*eggs in hands)* I found a few yellow, a few blue, and one pink egg in the bushes, look!

CL: Yeah! Me too, look!

Crook: Lookie here! Lookie here, boys, I got it! I found the lucky egg!

Mrs. McNeill: (*From the porch)*; Come up here Crook!

Crook: *(racing up the steps*) See Mrs. McNeill? I got it right here!

Mrs. McNeill: Open it up. Show everybody what you’ve found

Crook: Wow boys, what a good thrill! It's a Hundred Thousand Dollar bar, a gold ring, and a hundred dollar bill! Here (*holds the bill up*) Don’t ya see? Look at me!

Mrs. McNeill: Anything you’d like to say, Crook, you little star of our show here?

Crook: Yeah! Could Twyla come up here?

Twyla Clothcutter: I'm on my way up, darlin.

Crook: Here, take this golden ring and be my partner at the dance.

Twyla Clothcutter: I would be honored.

The crowd claps
Stage darkens

Scene Two

Sack races and horseshoe tosses in back of baseball field. May pole dance is going on.

Donna Darlin': Well, with the May Pole dance going on, you know the next event will be the festival dance.

Beau: I had a feeling maybe so.

Donna Darlin': An' just think boy, you hadn't even kissed me yet today.

Beau: Well, here's a good one flat on the left cheek. (*kisses Donna*)

Donna Darling: Hmm, that's so nice, Beau.

Beau: It couldn't be enough for everything you've done.

Donna Darling: (*sighs*) We've done much today. Don't you think?

Beau: We've ran the foot races, tossed the horseshoe, danced the morning jig, found a bunch of easter eggs.

Band in the background plays Tennessee Waltz

Lead singer: I was dancing with my darling
To the Tennessee waltz,

When an old friend I happened to see
As I introduced her to my loved ones,
While I was dancing took her from me.

I remember the night,
And the tennessee waltz,
Now I know just how much I have lost,
Yes, I lost my little darling on the night of
Tennessee waltz.

Crook: It's time for the festival dance, let's all go!

Gene Coffee: Oh my, it's all slow songs now.

Donna Darling: That's why we need partners. I'm glad I've got mine here with me.

CL: That's because Peanuts ain't here.

Fish: Would she share, Beau? Do ya thank so?

Beau: Maybe, in this situation, crazy station.

Fish: Why?

Beau: (smiles) You don't know what I know.

Donna Darlin': (*smiles warmly, glances up at Beau);* The spirits of the wild wood saved the best for last.

Band plays The Rose Of Alabama

Beau: takes Donna's left hand and places his right arm around her waist.

Lead singer: Away from Mississipii's vale,
With my 'ol hat there for a sail,
I crossed upon a cotton bale
To Rose of Alabama.

I landed on a far sandbank,

I sat upon a hollow plank,
And there I made the banjo twank,
For Rose of Alabama.

Oh brown Rosie,
Rose of Alabama!
Sweet tobacco posey
Is my Rose of Alabama.

I says to her sit as you please,
Across my leg she took her ease,
“Tis good to go upon thy knees,
Said Rose of Alabama.

The river rose the cricket sang,
The lightning bug did flash his wing.,
Then like a rope my arms I fling,
Round Rose of Alabama!

We hugged so long I cannot tell,
My beautiful rose seemed to like it so well,
My banjo in the river fell,
Oh Rose of Alabama.

Like Alligator after prey,
I dive in but it floats away,
An’ all the while it seems to say,
Oh Rose of Alabama!

Now every day come rain of shower,
I hunt my banjo for an hour,
And meet my sweet tobacco flower,
Oh Rose of Alabama!

Oh fare thee well ye belles of Spain,
And fare thee well to Liza Jane,
Ye charms shall all be put to shame
By Rose of Alabama.

Everybody begins to slow dance

Time passes…

The couples slow dance to seven other songs.

Amazing Grace plays

Donna Darling: Well, since this song has ended, I guess the dance is over for this year, Beau. We've danced a bit today, for sure.

Beau: Guess it is, Donna. I've surely had fun.

Donna Darlin': Want a walk?

Beau: Of course, my favorite dance partner, but to where?

Donna Darling: I have a surprise for you.

Beau: You're full of surprises, but what this time?

Donna Darlin': Do you know where the clover patch is?

Beau: Donna, I know where many a-clover patch is.

Donna Darling: But do you know where heaven's clover patch is?

Beau: Not exactly, I suppose. Wherever heaven is, I suppose.

Donna Darling: Well, come with me my little Beau-bo. Let me take the likes of you to heaven.

Beau: In truth, Donna, you already have.

Donna and Beau walk hand in hand toward the rear left corner of the ball field, stepping into the woods.

Beau: (*whispers*) This is dangerous country Donna.

Donna Darling: What's to fear, my Beau-bo dear?

Beau: Well, there's Hidebehinds, Golly-Whomps, and great big ole Wampus Cats in here!

Donna Darling: OK? Let's turn to the right and walk a spell through them sweet gum 'N pine trees, since we are in here good.

Beau: But you don't understand. There's YaHoos and Flea-backs in here too. They live up in here! (*Turns, suddenly gasps!)*

Donna Darlin': (*smiling)* Do you know where we are now, Beau?

Beau: Why, we're at the kissing tree, Donna, and it has a big yellow ribbon tied around it. How did we get to it walkin' from this way? (*points)* Look!

Donna Darling: That's right, Beau-bo, and the tree is all yours now.

Beau walks over toward the tree, doesn't glance back

Donna Darlin': (as Beau walks away) I enjoyed my days with you very much. Thank You forever, Beau. Nobody anywhere can ever take that away from me.

Lights dim slightly. Donna Darling quietly exits

Beau: Wow! Donna, you're the best! Wow! I'm overjoyed.

Beau: (*walks around the huge live oak tree without glancing backwards)* I can't believe it! I'm so happy!

Peanuts: (*suddenly steps from around the tree*) I knew you would come through all along!

Beau: (*gasps*) Well, I had a little help from my friends, ya know.

Peanuts: Oh yeah? Friends? Which ones?

Beau: Well, (*points)* Donna 's right there.

Peanuts: Where? In the shadows? I don't see her.

Beau: (turns around) I can't believe it, she's gone! Where did she go? She was right There. Right there, I tell you!

Peanuts: Well, (*places arms around his neck)* looks like it's only us two now, Beau.

Beau: I see that, and I am so happy, Peanuts. I promise I won't get into any more trouble, ever! I'm settling down for good this time.

Peanuts: And look at what I've found Beau, *(she points, begins stepping out*) lookie here!

Beau: It's a clover patch, (*bends down, plucks several*) filled with four leaf clovers, look!

Peanuts: Yeah, like it was put there just for us, Beau!

Beau: This must be heaven's clover patch, Peanuts.

Peanuts: What is that?

Breau: It's a long story, Peanuts. Let me tell you all about it as we walk back together toward the school house. (*they pause, he gazes into her eyes*) All I can say is today surely must be the happiest day of my entire life.

Beau and Peanuts exit with their arms around one another's waist

Lights dim out as they go

Curtains fall

The End